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THE TREE OF LIFE IN INDO-EUROPEAN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

BY GEORGE LECHLER

IN ISLAM THE TREE OF LIFE IS GIVEN THE NAME SİDRA OR ṬUBĀ. IN THE MINDS OF THE Muḥammadans it grows in the midst of Paradise and thus becomes a fit subject for artistic representation, and, consequently, may be found woven into the miḥrāb of prayer rugs (cf. *Figs. 1-4*).

The early authorities of Islam, when interpreting the *Ḳur'ān*, explained that the Sīdra stands in the seventh heaven on the right hand of the throne of God, and marks the utmost bounds of Paradise beyond which the angels themselves must not pass. This is impressively told in Sūra LIII: 16, and reaffirmed as the sūra continues with the statement: "Near it is the garden of eternal abode."¹

The Sīdret-el muntehā ("the Sīdra of the utmost bounds") has its prototype on the earth in the Sīdra tree, a kind of wild plum tree, *Ziziphus jujuba*, which grows in Arabia and India. It produces small plums. This tree is also sacred to the Muḥammadans as is demonstrated by their custom of throwing its leaves into water which they use to cleanse a corpse during a burial ceremony.² Hāfiz in the *Dīwān*³ draws upon ancient Persian traditions in his descriptions⁴ of the Sīdra:

On the holy boughs of the Sīdra
High up in the heavenly fields
Being beyond terrestrial desire
My soul-bird a warm nest has built.

By the soul-bird he indicates a fresh development, and fusing this with the old Persian ideas he forms a new Islamic interpretation.

In Babylonia the tree of life was called the tree of Ea, the father of the gods; it grows in Eridu, and also has the name Ukkānū. Those who ate its fruit were supposed to receive eternal life. From this belief is derived the tree of life of the Old Testament, growing in the midst of Paradise. (The Babylonian Paradise was also situated in Eridu.)⁵

In the religion of Zoroaster the tree of life is called the white haoma (homa), and its fruit is used to nourish the blessed spirits in heaven. The beverage made from it has the same name in the *Avesta*.⁶ Very similar to this is the soma of the old Indian Veda.⁷ The word soma is

¹ *The Korān*, trans. G. Sale, New York, 1922, p. 508.

² A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed*, Berlin, 1869, I, p. 306.

³ J. Karabacek, *Die Persische Nadelmalerei Susanschird*, Leipzig, 1881, p. 154.

⁴ A. Wünsche, "Die Sagen vom Lebensbaum und Lebenswasser," *Ex Oriente Lux*, I, 1905, p. 9.

⁵ S. Langdon, *Mythology of All Races: Semitic*, Boston, 1928, XII, p. 194.

⁶ F. Wolff, *Avesta, die heiligen Buecher der Parsen*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1924.

⁷ A. A. Macdonnell, "Vedic Mythology," *Encycl. Indo-Aryan Research*, Strassburg, 1896-1920, Vol. III, 1 Hft., A.

etymologically derived from haoma and consequently dates back to Indo-Iranian time. The holy fig trees (*Ficus indica* and *Ficus religiosa*) also play an important role in Indian literature.⁸ In the same literature Amṛta gives immortality, and the fruit of the tree Kalpavriksha is probably identical with the fruit of the holy fig trees. In addition to being a source of immortality the holy fig trees fulfill all wishes brought to them, and thus become wishing trees.⁹

Very similar to this is the belief of the ancient Germans who adored the dragon-guarded apple tree belonging to the wife of the god Bragi, the goddess Iduna. These apples bring eternal youth to the Aesir. The Greek idea of the apple tree in the garden of the Hesperides, also guarded by a dragon, corresponds to this. The fruit also preserves the lives of the Greek pantheon.¹⁰

Some writers have deduced that the myth of the ancient German apple tree must be relatively young because of the fact that the Romans brought the knowledge of this tree into the North. The opinion is an erroneous one. Excavations at Alvastra in Sweden have proved that the ancestors of the ancient Germans cultivated apple trees of two different kinds.¹¹ The settlement in which the apples were found belongs to neolithic time in the third millennium B.C. (The climate was two degrees centigrade warmer than today.) The remains of apples are found in mound burials of about 1500 B.C. These apples were placed as symbolic additional gifts in the oak coffins during the period of the primitive Germanic culture in Denmark.¹²

As a consequence of closer contact with Christianity, the Muḥammadans developed the idea of the tree of life inspired by pictures of the Sīdra tree of Sassanian-Arabian art. This is especially noticeable in the Greek *Apocalypse* of Moses in which Adam, facing death, sent his son Seth to Paradise to secure some oil from the "tree of mercy." Through the entire medieval period this narrative was transformed by French, English, and German poets into fables about the wood from which the Cross of Christ was made. In these Seth is portrayed as hastening to Paradise and there receiving from the Cherub three seeds of the tree of life. When he returned Adam had died, and Seth placed the three seeds in Adam's mouth. From this beginning there grew the tree from which the Jews made the Cross of Christ. This became the new tree of life which has brought life to the souls of men just as the old tree of life inspired and gave immortality to the souls in heaven.

The principal works and writers on this subject, according to Wünsche,¹³ are: Nicodemus' *Evangelium*; Ethiopian Christian *Book of Adam*; *World Chronicle*, by Rudolf of Ems; *Book of Excerpts*, by Floridus Lambertus; *Speculum Historiales*, by Vincent of Beauvais; *Legenda Aurea*, by Jacobus de Voragine; Heinrich von Meissen; and *The Holy Cross*, by Henry of Freiburg. The last work Wünsche cites as being especially interesting in its full text.

⁸ B. Keith, *Mythology of All Races: Indian*, Boston, 1927, VI, p. 46 ff.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, trans. S. C. Stallybrass (*Teutonic Mythology*), London, 1883.

¹¹ O. Froedin, "Einzigartige Steinzeitfunde bei Alvastra," *Mammus, Zeitschr. f. Vorgesch.*, I, 1909, p. 309.

¹² G. Lechler, *5000 Jahre Deutschland*, Leipzig, 1936, p. 56.

¹³ Wünsche, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 ff.

There are also some dozen medieval dramatic or epic works which Wünsche discusses, and finally there are the principal writers of later times: Tirso de Molina, Calderón, Milton, Rückert, and Seidl. Even in novels such as *The Adventurous Simplicissimus* by Hans von Grimmelshausen, written before 1671, there is found the motif of the tree of life transformed into a social picture. In chapter fifteen, the author describes a dream in which the hero saw a huge tree transforming its leaves into human figures; on the top were the nobility and at the roots the peasants. The people above forced those beneath them to work hard; thus the author satirizes the social conditions of his time (cf. *Fig. 21*).

The fact that the old Germanic god Odin hung for nine days on the great ash tree of the universe, Yggdrasil (Hávamál), is often incorrectly described as a result of Christian influence; this myth probably leads back to old Nordic belief. Moreover the holy tree of the Old Germans and Slavs is the linden tree, that of the Celts is the holy stone oak.¹⁴ Here mention must be made of the old belief of the creation of the first man out of trees. In the *Edda* the first couple have the names Ask and Embla, and they were created from the ash and the elm (their names are identical with the names of the trees). The same kind of fables are found in Persia, Rome, and Greece.

The belief that man was created from the tree of life reached as far as the Yacuts: The first man as "the white youth" was below the seven stories, the nine disks of heaven in the central place, and there he approached the tree of life and prayed to the mistress of life for a partner as did Adam in the Bible. Then the leaves of the tree began to rustle, and finally the tree creaked, and a female being rose up from under its roots.¹⁵ In Egypt, Greece, and India there was a belief that men were transformed into trees as were Osiris, Daphne, and Soma. The old Romans planted plane trees as "patron saints" for the newborn children. This practice resulted in an ever flourishing worship of trees, as for example that of the oak of Zeus at Dodona or of the oak of Diana at Lake Nemi. Thus it happened that frequently women were married to trees (Pliny). This was reversed at the sanctuary of Diana at Lake Nemi where the first priest, whose title was "King of the Woods," became the husband of the "holy oak."¹⁶

The extent to which the concept of the tree of life occupied the Christian mind is shown by the fact that many churchmen and religious teachers discussed this question in great detail.¹⁷ Thus Ephraim, the Syrian, called the tree of life the "Sun of Paradise" before which all the other trees bowed their heads (cf. *Fig. 136*). Other religious writers who have discussed the tree of life include Chrysostom, Theodoret, Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Rupert of Deutz, Bonaventure, Luther, and Calvin.

Closely connected with the tree of life was the water of life which ran out of its roots or in which the tree stood. To the Indo-Europeans water was the creator of life. Thus in the

¹⁴ C. Clemen, *Religions of the World, Their Nature, Their History*, New York, 1931.

¹⁵ U. Holmberg, "The Tree of Life," *Mythology of All Races: Finno-Ugric, Siberian*, Boston, 1927, IV, p. 352.

¹⁶ J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, New York, 1935, I, p. 40.

¹⁷ H. Wace, *Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature*, London, 1911.

Veda, the god Agni originates and maintains life with the help of heavenly water. In the Greek tradition the same thing was done by Oceanus, the god of the Ocean, who created all the other gods. In the *Edda*, also, the water Elivagar was the source from which the primeval giant Ymir, the first being, was made.

In 1905 August Wünsche published his researches, which are fundamental on this subject. The present article may be said to be a continuation of his researches¹⁸ and those of Ward,¹⁹ and it also indicates the available archaeological material. The documents demonstrate that the tree of life had a central position in the religious worship of the past and that it was equally established in all branches of Indo-European culture. Its origins lie farther back than the neolithic culture.

Thirty years ago Kossinna pointed out that in the original Germanic language the word for tree trunk was identical with the god concept. However, from the documentary material as far back as four thousand years ago we learn that the later tradition was present which said that the tree trunk was an abbreviation or abstract form of the tree of life or world tree. This world tree was symbolized by the asherah (see p. 388).

A place of sacrifice which belonged to the "Hamburgian" culture contemporary with the Magdalenian period was found by Rust at Ahrensburg near Hamburg, Germany.²⁰ This place chronologically dates back by pollen profile to the Würm glacier before 12000 B.C. In the deposit of sedimentary strata from a pond of that time, Rust discovered the remains of a large number of young reindeer. They had been submerged in the pond, and each reindeer had a large stone in its breast. That these reindeer were victims of the hunt is evident from the arrow holes in their scapulae. It is probable therefore that they were thrown into the water as a sacrifice to the life-giving god. On the bank of the pond a large wooden post had been erected upon which was placed a reindeer skull. Here occur together the sacrifice, the water, and the tree trunk, and this was perhaps fifteen thousand years ago. (The sacrifice of the reindeer and the erection of the post belonged to the "Ahrensburg stage.")

It may be that the interpretation is in some details open to discussion as to exact meaning, but one thing is certain and that is that there existed a very old religious tradition in neolithic times in Europe and at the beginning of historic times in the Orient. The find is not an isolated one. There are examples of primitive art undoubtedly with a religious significance in caverns in the south of Europe. Carvings of snakes have been found in the caverns of Langerie Basse and La Pileta, and sculptures of them at Montespan and Tuc d'Audoubert. A carving, found in Denmark at Horring, belonging to the mesolithic culture of Maglemose probably seven thousand years before our time (*Fig. 102*) may also be noted. Here already

¹⁸ Wünsche, *op. cit.*; A. Wünsche, "Schoepfung und Suedenfall," *Ex Oriente Lux*, II, 1906.

¹⁹ W. A. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia*, Washington, 1910.

²⁰ A. Rust, "Die jungpalaeolithischen und fruehmesolithischen Kulturschichten aus einem Tunneltale bei Ahrensburg (Holstein)," *Nachrichtenblatt f. d. Vorzeit*, XI, 1935, p. 223; A. Rust, "Die Grabungen bei Ahrensburg," *Nachrichtenblatt f. d. Vorzeit*, XII, 1936, p. 229.

there is the same composition found in later periods of Nordic prehistoric times, which will be discussed later in connection with the archaeological documents of Crete.

Among the old recorded traditions on this subject the best known, of course, is in the Old Testament where the story of the tree of life (*ēz hachajjim*) which stands in the midst of Paradise is related in Genesis 2 and 3. This is obviously the original belief. The so-called Yahvist who edited Genesis in the ninth century B.C. introduced the tree of knowledge standing beside the tree of life in order to explain the first sin.²¹ On this tree of knowledge was fruit which enabled those who ate of it to distinguish between good and evil. The expulsion from Paradise was accomplished so that man might not eat of the fruit from the tree of life and receive eternal life. The fruit of the tree of life secured eternal youth. An original opinion is found again in the Proverbs of Solomon: "A tree of life is wisdom to those who acquire it" (Prov. 3: 18). According to Gen. 9: 20, the tree of life was probably the stem of a vine. Thus very often the stem of a vine represents the tree of life on Christian sarcophagi (*Fig. 27c*).

It seems possible that the tree of knowledge is not a later introduction, as Wünsche and Ward²² point out, because there are two trees also mentioned in old Indian literature, although unfortunately without clearly stated arguments. In the famous Greek "Alexander novel"²³ it is obvious that both trees were placed in the midst of Paradise, representing the upper world and the lower world; one named Helios ("Sun"), the other named Selene ("Moon"). In the *Qur'ān*, Sūra XCV: 1, they are mentioned both as a fig tree and an olive tree. It is not very easily established, but clearly the *Ṭubā* might have corresponded to the tree of knowledge rather than having been a substitute or second name for the *Siḍra*. The Muḥammadan tradition leads back to the Jewish; thus it does not support the theory of the priority of the tree of knowledge.

In the book of Henoch, chapters 24 and 25, which is part of the Old Testament Apocrypha, it is related that at the south of the world there exist seven mounds built with precious stones and on the central mound stands the tree of life. The archangel Michael told Henoch that the Lord of Lords when he descends to us will have his throne upon one of the mounds. The tree will give eternal life to the elected few by its fruit, which might be compared in shape to a bunch of dates. The tree will be transplanted to the north beside the temple of the Lord in order that it may stand on the holy place. Obviously the Israelite author was thinking in terms of customs of worship in which a tree was brought into the temple as part of the ceremony. A Hittite cuneiform document from the thirteenth century B.C. is proof of the existence of this kind of custom. Its source is only a continuation²⁴ of prochattic (pre-Hittite) ideas and therefore it belongs to a time before 2000 B.C. The described festivity, celebrated for six days to praise the return of the god Telebinus at the yule time, December 25, took place in the city of Kashā. Telebinus, the husband of the sun goddess Arinna, disappeared from the world and

²¹ Wünsche, "Die Sagen vom Lebensbaum und Lebenswasser," p. 4, footnote.

²² Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

²³ J. Friedländer, "Alexanders Zug nach dem Lebens-

quell," *Archiv f. Religionswissenschaft.*, XIII, 1910.

²⁴ E. Forrer and G. Lechler, "Der Ursprung des Weihnachtsbaumes," *Germanen Erbe*, I, 1936, pp. 262 ff.

cultural life began to die. All the other gods searched for him; finally a bee found him, and he came back. The cuneiform text speaks of the festivity:

Telebinus presents also the king and the queen with
 life, strength and the future.
 In this manner Telebinus loads the king with presents:
 before him stands a tree, but on the tree hangs a sack
 which is made from sheepskin
 therein is mutton suet
 therein are barley, ears of corn and also grapes
 therein are cattle, many years and also descendants
 therein lies the wholesome message of wisdom
 therein lies a courageous happy nature.
 therein lies . . .
 therein lies the right will
 therein lies . . .

Surely there is here a prototype of the Christmas tree; and the sack containing gifts, which hangs on the tree, today is carried by Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas. Further, the sack was a gift of a bearded and rugged god, Indar, who is called in the inscriptions "The God of the Sack."

The withered tree of the year before was taken from the temple, and was replaced by the new tree before the millstone of the god Telebinus. Then followed the bestowal of presents to the king, gifts of cookies in symbolic forms such as cattle, the year, and the future. The god Indar of the sheepskin sack, whose name appears in all the treaties among the gods of oaths such as Mithra and Varuna,²⁵ was venerated in two temples of the Hittite kingdom. In these were put up the sacks brought by him. The temples were called the "temples of the sack of the sheepskin." Obviously Indar was the god of the mountains, valleys, and wild animals, in other words the god of nature. Thus he brought the sack as a tribute of nature to Telebinus, the god of culture.

That in addition to this in the cultural circle of the Near East the tree was an item of cultic rites is indicated by Assyrian seals on which appear figures wearing fish disguises. In the Phrygian festival of Attis, the god of spring, there also took place the introduction of a tree (*arbor intrat*), and Lucian reported a similar cultic rite at Hierapolis in Syria.²⁶ In Figure 68 the god Ashur is soaring as a winged sun over the tree of life or tree of the world; at each side of it stand two priests in fish disguises. The fish is a particularly strong symbol of life and resurrection.²⁷ On the seal (*Fig. 69*) appears a trinity of gods in a winged sun which is

²⁵ J. Garstang, *The Hittite Empire*, New York, 1930.

²⁶ C. Clemen, *Primitive Christianity*, Edinburgh, 1912.

²⁷ F. Doelger, *ΙΧΘΥΣ*, Münster, 1922-1928, Vol. I, "Das Fischsymbol in fruehchristlicher Zeit" (2nd ed.,

1928); Vol. II, "Der heilige Fisch in den antiken Religionen"; Vol. III, "Die Fischdenkmaeler in der fruehchristlichen Plastik, Malerei und Kleinkunst." Shorter outline, Doelger, *Christentum und Antike*, Münster, 1932.



FIG. 1

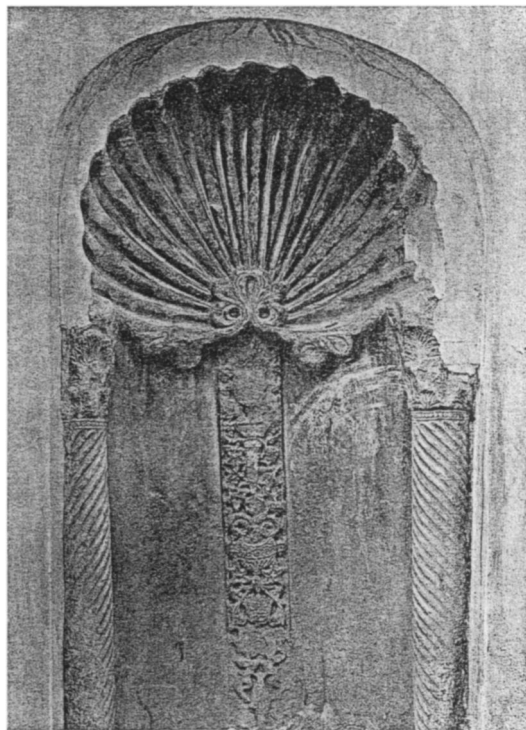


FIG. 2



FIG. 3



FIG. 4

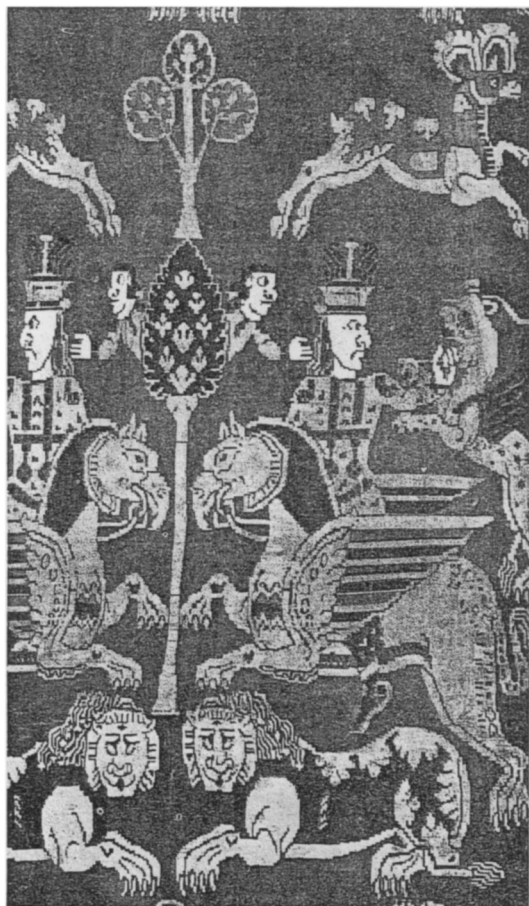


FIG. 5

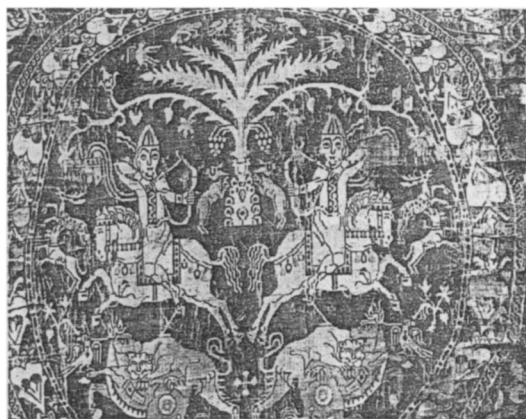


FIG. 6

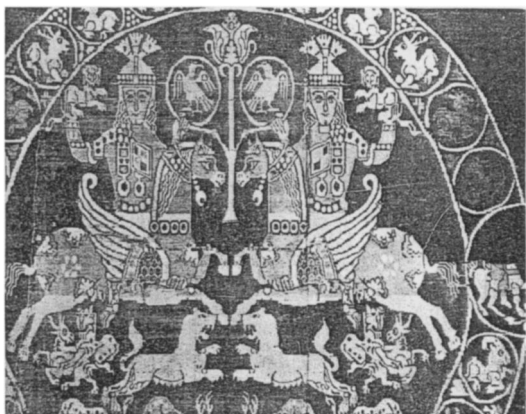


FIG. 7

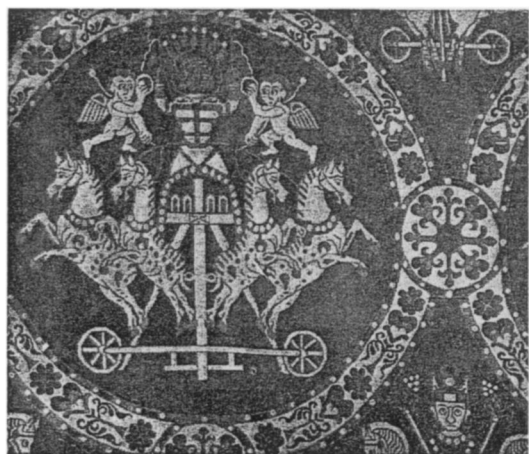


FIG. 8

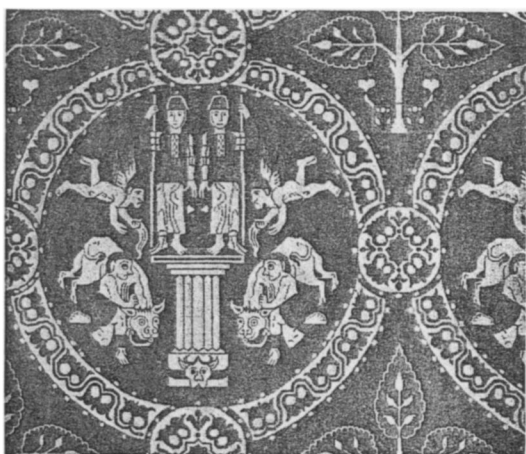


FIG. 9

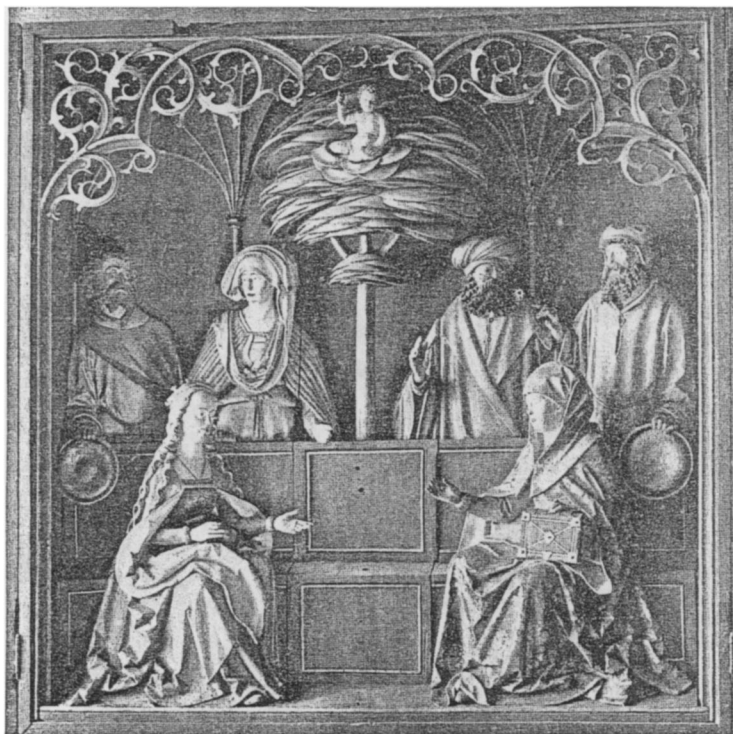


FIG. 10



FIG. 11



FIG. 14

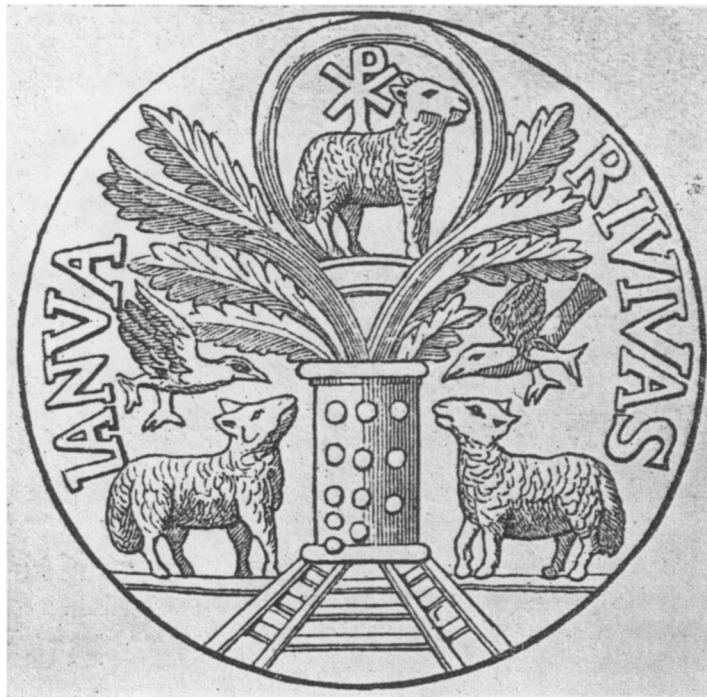


FIG. 15



FIG. 16

carried by two creatures, half bull, half man, above the tree of life. Beside it are pictured the cross and a star with eight rays, which is the cuneiform ideogram for *ilu* = god = sun = year. Corresponding to this on the right is the moon cycle; this gives a complete symbolization of the circle of the year. Again, beside this is a priest in fish disguise. The identity of the tree of life with the tree of the world is clearly denoted by the seals in Figures 70, 73, and 74. In Figure 73 the tree is crowned by a radiant sun, and in Figure 70 the tree itself has changed into a tree trunk or post, and the sun is symbolized on its top by a wheel with eight spokes. The sun wheel represents the ideogram *ilu* = god, found on the other pictures beside the tree.

Other parallels include European neolithic finds. In Figures 101-107 the sun symbol is soaring near the tree. Figure 22 shows the Swedish midsummer post ("yule rusk"), that is, the tree of the year which is erected annually at the solstice. Figure 23 brings the "queste" which bears the wheel of the year and which will be renewed every Pentecost. Beside the wheel of the year (*Fig. 70*), which is also reported in pictures of Hittite seals (Louvre, Nos. 611-612), appear again two fishes soaring above two griffins. Both fishes are also visible on seals in Figures 67 and 71. The fish called Karafish in connection with the tree of life, the world tree, is also reported in the *Avesta* (*Yasht* 14, 29).

Following the *Bundahish* 18:19, ten Karafish circle the root of the tree of life (Gaokerena), growing in the midst of the sea (Vourukasha), and defend it against the dragon of the depth. The tree Gaokerena produces haoma, the beverage of life, the aforementioned soma of the Indians, which gives eternal life.²⁸

The Artemis, "the mistress of life," of the Boeotian vase of the eighth century (*Fig. 60*), wears on her skirt a fish as an especially powerful symbol of fertility. This symbolism exists even today in the customs of Europeans; thus in Germany, for example, the carp is the traditional food for yule time.

The Kalmucks show in every detail dependency upon the Indian beliefs. Thus the Kalmucks call the tree of life Zambu, which is derived from the Indian name Yambu. The Yambu rises out of the Marvo Sea from which place four great rivers flow toward the different points of the compass.²⁹ They emerge from rocks which look like an elephant, a bull, a horse, and a lion. The animals represent the east, south, west, and north. This is an extremely old belief among the civilized peoples of Asia. For this reason it is reported that the Mongols, in order to prevent diseases, built sanctuaries at the four sides of which they erected wooden images of the points of the compass, a tiger, a lion, an eagle, and a dragon. Sometimes the palmettos, which are obviously abbreviations of the tree of life (*cf. Figs. 42-44, 64-65*), are arranged in cross form as Montelius has pictured with excellent examples.³⁰ Perhaps hereby emphasis is placed upon the four directions of heaven; perhaps at other times these are represented by animals (*cf. Fig. 80*). This old method of representation of the points of the compass may make comprehensible the frequent appearance in Sassanian art of animals in connection

²⁸ Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

²⁹ Holmberg, *op. cit.*

³⁰ O. Montelius, *Die älteren Kulturperioden*, Stockholm, 1916-23, Figs. 380, 393-395.

with the tree of life (cf. *Figs. 59-64*). This symbolism was not always a conscious one in the Islamic silk fabrics; it may explain only the origin of the animals. As the tree used in the Hittite festivity of Telebinus on December 25 demonstrates, and also as the fish of the Assyrian seals informs us, the tree of life is nothing but a synonym for the tree symbolizing the year, which means it has a cosmic interpretation. Further confirmation of this is received from Indian poetry of the late period Vedas, such as the Upanishad, which is contemporary with the late Assyrian seals:

The roots upward, the branches downward thus stands the
eternal fig tree
the leaves of which are Veda songs; Veda is thinking of
those who think of this tree
Upward and downward its branches are bending
Nobody on the earth is able to conceive of its form
either its end or beginning or its duration.³¹

The eternal fig tree spoken of in the above poem has the name Ashvattha³² or "seed of all things." The juice that it produces, amṛita, identical with soma, is the water of life. It is also possible that the Assyrians considered the fruit of the tree of life to be a liquid, since on the relief of the Nimrud palace, for example (*Fig. 82*), the winged genius with an eagle head holds in his hand a vessel of liquid; this kind of vessel is sometimes decorated with the tree of life. The relationship to the year is shown on the Assyrian tree of life by symbolic numbers. The palmetto forming its crown has seven parts, and the palmetto "fruits" are $12 + 1 = 13$. On each side of the trunk, as in Figure 84, are seven branches, and in the palmettos of the crown there are nine. The same thing occurs in Figure 79; the tree (1) is placed in a circle with six crowns of trees and six fruits on the outer rim ($1 + 6 + 6 = 13$), a symbolic arrangement in the shape of a sun wheel. This symbolization occurs again in Figure 80; beside the tree stands a wheel the four spokes of which are formed out of four figures holding trees in their hands (cf. above, the four animals representing the directions).

An Altaic folk song relates of the tree of life: "In the center of the earth there is an iron mountain and on this iron mountain a white seven-branched birch." Holmberg established the fact that the mythology of Altai depended completely upon the old Iranian peoples.

In the traditions of the Yakuts: "This tree is so old that its age cannot be reckoned in centuries. Its roots stretch through the Lower World and its crown pierces the nine heavens. The length of each leaf is seven fathoms and that of the cones, its fruit, nine fathoms."

Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, dealing with old cults and myths concerning trees, has informed the whole world about old Greek and Roman ideas. The title suggests that the leaves

³¹ *Kāṭhaka Upanishad*, VI, 1, *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, ed. P. Deussen, Leipzig, 1921.

³² H. Wirth, *Die Heilige Urschrift der Menschheit*, Leipzig, 1931-35, pp. 406-431.

of the holy tree were made of gold. In Siberia is found the same idea, dependent in its mental speculation upon the Old Orient, as already mentioned. In an old Minusinsk poem the tree is described:

Piercing twelve heavens
on a summit of a mountain
a birch in the misty depths of air
golden are the birch leaves
golden its bark
in the ground at its foot a basin
full of the water of life
in the basin a golden ladle.

It is very interesting to note that at the Šušinak temple of Susa were found, as deposited, gifts of votive leaves made of golden bronze (*Fig. 123*). The same idea exists in northern Europe. Here the world tree, the ash Yggdrasil, also has golden leaves, and the same thing is reported in the Indian Vedas. This supports the contention that we have to deal with an idea—more than five thousand years old—common to all Indo-European branches.

In the oldest Babylonian tradition the tree of life is called a palm and is symbolized by a palmetto:

In Eridu (the place of creation) grows a dark palm
from virgin soil it sprouted up,
The life of Ea is full of plenty in Eridu
his home is the Lower World.
... inside dwell Shamash and Tammuz.³³

Later the tree of life becomes a kind of pine or palm. This originated probably from Sumerian times; the cedar is spoken of as the holy tree under Gudea, 2340 B.C., where Ħumbaba guarded "the mountain of cedar." This mountain, which was the sanctuary of Irnini (= Ishtar), was identical with the mountain of the gods.

The Gilgamesh epic says:

They stand considering the forest,
Gazing on the height of the cedars,
Gazing on the entrance of the forest,
Where Ħumbaba is wont to wander about with great strides;
The ways are laid out, the paths are well made;
They gaze on the hill of cedars, the dwelling-place of
the gods, the sanctuary of Irnini.
In the front of the hill a cedar rises in grandeur,
Goodly is its shade, full of gladness . . .
It produces samtu-stones as fruit;
Its boughs hang with them, glorious to behold;
The crown of it produces lapis lazuli;
Its fruit is costly to gaze upon.

³³ S. Langdon, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, Oxford, 1914.



FIG. 12



FIG. 13



FIG. 22



FIG. 23

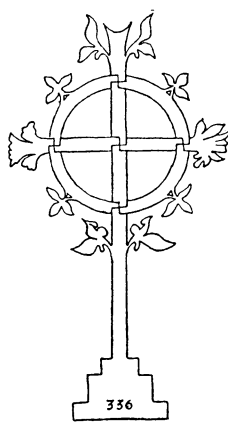


FIG. 24

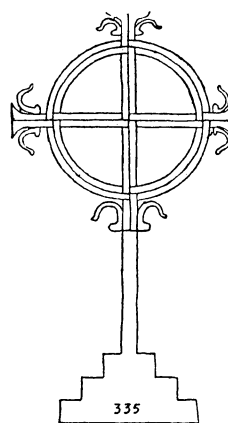


FIG. 25

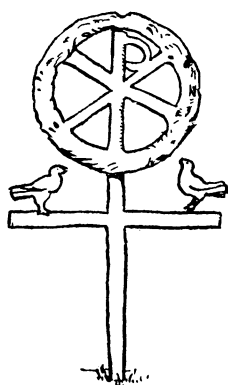


FIG. 26

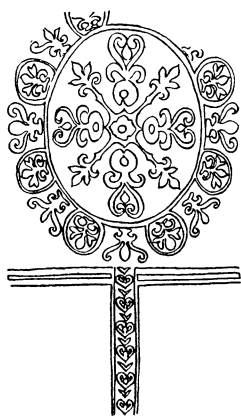


FIG. 27



FIG. 28



FIG. 29



FIG. 30



FIG. 17



FIG. 18



FIG. 19



FIG. 20



FIG. 21



FIG. 27 a



FIG. 27 b



FIG. 27 c

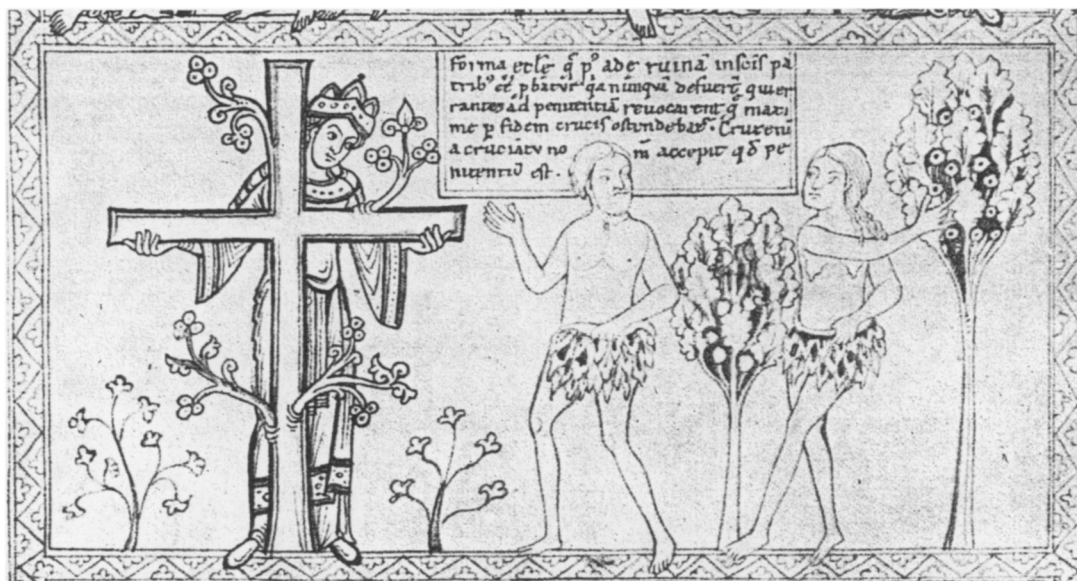


FIG. 31

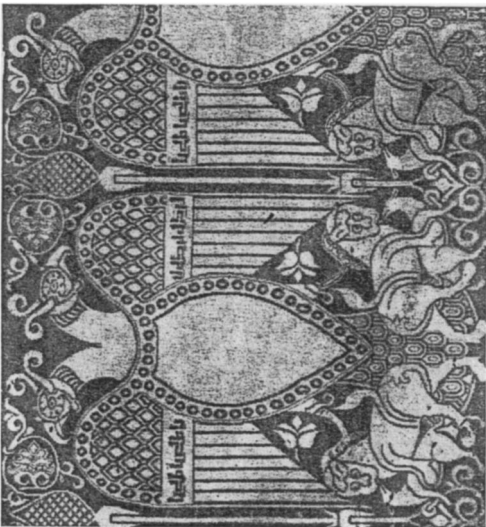


FIG. 38

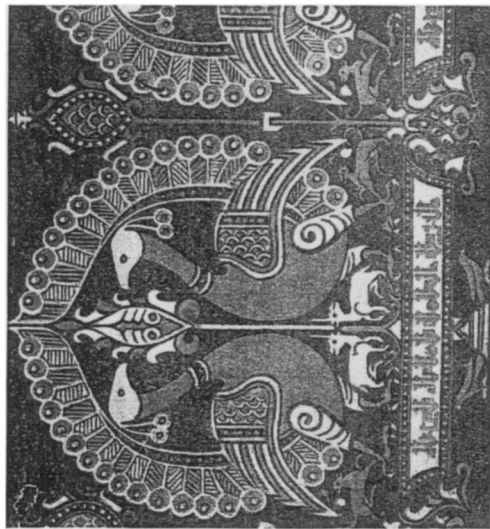


FIG. 39

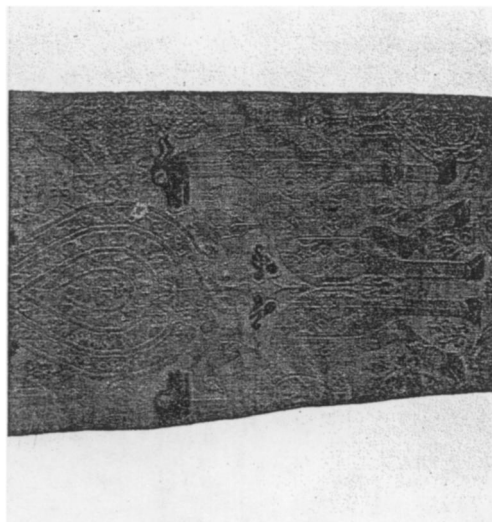


FIG. 40



FIG. 41



FIG. 32

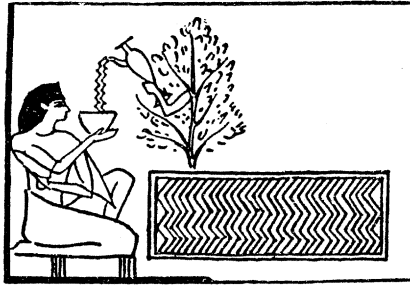


FIG. 33



FIG. 34 a

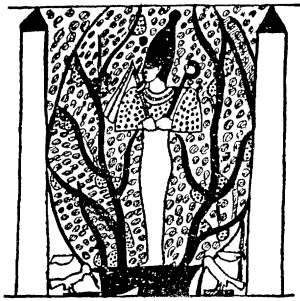


FIG. 34 b

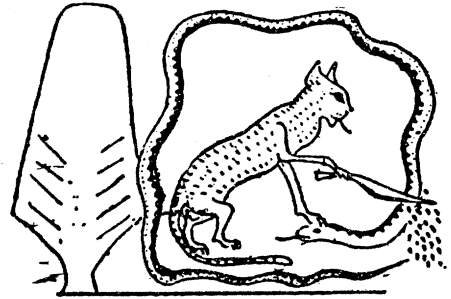


FIG. 34 c

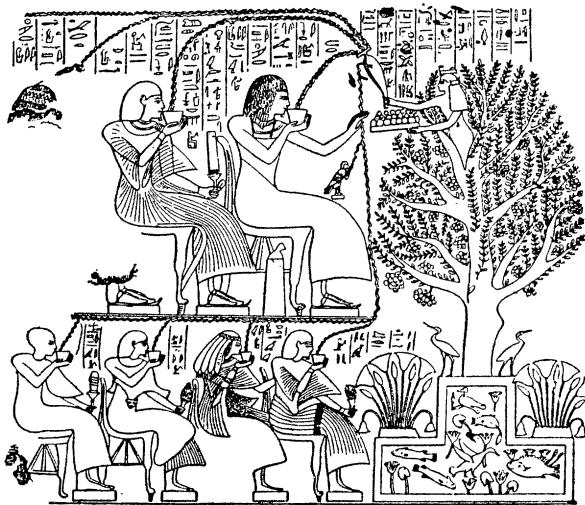


FIG. 35

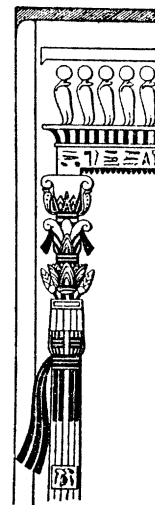


FIG. 36

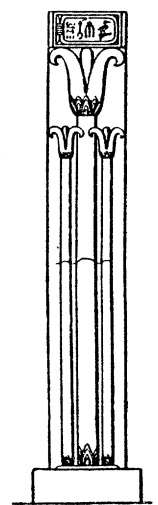


FIG. 37

There are also traditions in Europe that coniferous trees were sacred trees, as von Zingerle pointed out.³⁴

The myth of the "Mountain of the Gods" as the home of the pantheon (= Paradise) must have had its origin in pre-Sumerian time, since there were no mountains in Babylonia. The belief³⁵ that this mountain was located in the north may have been the result of their migrations from that region.³⁶

The same complex of ideas from tradition is expressed in the Old Testament, Ezek. 31:1, which relates that the sacred cedar, as the "world tree," has its topmost branches high up in the heavens; in Ezek. 28:1, it states that the garden of Eden, the garden of God, is situated on God's sacred mountain. Believing this the Israelites only took over pre-Israelite cults of Canaan, whose people were obviously closely related to the Indo-Europeans, as is established in many places in the Old Testament.³⁷ As late as Josiah the Israelite cult was concentrated in Jerusalem, and all sanctuaries on the tops of the mountains were declared illegal (Deut. 16:21). What was the form of the sacred Canaanite high places adopted by the Israelites? (Mic. 5:13, 14; Isa. 17:8, and 27:9; Jer. 17:2; I Kings 14:23; II Kings 17:10, 16.) In addition to many sites that are unknown, there were many famous ones such as Garizim, Carmel, Moria, and Sinai. An altar on the highest point of each holy mountain was the center of the sanctuary; beside the altar stood a sacred tree, asherah, and a stone pillar, massebah. Here it is possible to determine the various conceivable shapes of the sacred tree. The descriptions of the asherah, especially important because they belong to the second millennium B.C., are nearly the same as the ones two thousand years later for the Germanic "Irmensul." The asherah, or tree of life or world tree, was either a real tree or at least a trunk of a tree. It could have been in the natural state with its roots in the soil, or it could have been cut down (Isa. 17:8; I Kings 14:15; 16:33; Jer. 6:26). It could have been carved at the top, the same as found, for example, in Middle Germany (*Fig. 121*). If it was destroyed or broken into pieces, a new one could then be erected. Consequently it seems that there is here documentary proof that a symbolic abbreviation such as a tree trunk or wooden column could have been substituted for a living tree.³⁸ These facts also shed light on North European conditions because there are dolmens and megalithic graves in Canaan of the same character as those in North Europe (Denmark, Sweden, northwest Germany).

Holmberg summarizes the identity of the tree of life and world column as follows:

In the belief of the peoples related to the Turks this tree which with the growth of the universe has grown from a small sapling to its present height, is intimately connected, like the World mountain, with the construction of the universe. And independently of whether it rises from the earth, a high mountain or some story in the sky, its position always resembles that of the world pillar. Like the former,

³⁴ V. Zingerle, "Der heilige Baum von Nauders," *Zeitschr. f. d. Mythen und Sittenkunde*, IV, 1859.

³⁵ Lechler, *op. cit.*, pp. 112 ff.

³⁶ H. Gressmann, *The Tower of Babel*, New York, 1928.

³⁷ *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. J. Hastings, New York, 1908, I, p. 164.

³⁸ J. Newton, *Assyrian Grove Worship*, New York, 1922.

the gods use this also to tether their horses to. It is a fact also that it is often pictured as many-storied. Thus it resembles the World-pillar.³⁹

In the light of this it may be understood why the tree of life was interchanged with a column at various times in Crete (*Figs. 92-93*). The most famous example of the column is that of the lion gate of Mycenae. There are three very important relationships in Crete: the tree of life associated with a lion or bird, the tree of life associated with a snake, and the tree of life associated with a ship.

The lion as a symbol of power or the griffin as a supernatural beast still more powerfully connects the tree of life = the world tree = world pillar with the goddess ruling over life and death. For Crete and Greece this means the mistress of animals, Cybele, who later became Aphrodite-Artemis. Here it may be mentioned, in order to demonstrate how old the first traces of a fertility goddess are, that already in the Aurignacian of the Upper Palaeolithic appeared statuettes of maternal fertility. This period runs from about 100000 B.C. to about 65000 B.C. (Venus of Willendorf, Brassempouy, Mentone, Lespugue). Figure 64 portrays the mistress of animals with wings (as omnipresent), with four lions (ruling the four regions of the earth), two snakes (the two parts of the year), and an eagle (the sun). In Figure 60 the same winged goddess appears, accompanied by two wolves, two peacocks, and also a head of a bull, a swastika, and a bull's leg with a swastika (animals perhaps symbolizing seasons of the year: birds, summer; wolves, winter; the relationship to the heaven is given by the leg of the bull = constellation of Ursa).⁴⁰ A fish is designed on her skirt, and the outline of the skirt is formed by waves; consequently she is also mistress of the waters, and the fish indicates the connection with the symbols of the Babylonian-Assyrian cylinders (fish disguise). On both the right and left border of the picture there is a snake beside which are ears of grain. The whole constitutes a perfect picture of an all-encompassing divine power and fertility.

Originally the snake belonged to the same system of thinking as the fish. The word for eel in many Indo-European languages is the same as the word for snake, which is proof that the eel was considered to be a snake-fish. This conclusion is comprehensible in view of the small knowledge of anatomy at that time. Later the snake became a symbol for the sun because in the north the snake, like the sun, hibernates during the winter (the sun "hibernates" for forty days in the polar winter), and the snake moves in spirals as the sun does also in the course of a year. Thus the spiral was a symbol of the sun. Further, there is documentary proof that the Egyptian *How* snake was a symbol for the sun.⁴¹ Paralleling this are Babylonian and Hittite seals on which the snake is carved on the tree of life. The same snake, of course, may be found on the tree of knowledge referred to in the Bible. In reality the snake on the Babylonian seals symbolizes "death and birth" as an allegory of the cosmic course of the year compared with living beings. The sun wheel with its four, six, or eight spokes symbolizes also

³⁹ Holmberg, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ W. Schultz, "Das Hakenkreuz als Grundzeichen des westsemitischen Alphabets," *Memnon, Zeitschr. f. d.*

Kunst und Kultur des alten Orients, III, 1910, pp. 176 ff.

⁴¹ O. Almgren, *Nordische Felszeichnungen als religiöse Urkunden*, Frankfurt, 1933, p. 74.

the cosmic course of the year,⁴² but this is taken from the circular movement of the sun, indicated in the Veda to the sun: "Be rolling as a wheel" (*Tilak*, III: 61, 3; cf. Montelius⁴³ who has established this as a primeval Indo-European symbol of the sun year).

Figures 58, 59, and 61 show still more Greek representations of the eighth century B.C., of the mistress of life together with birds, lions, boughs of trees, the sun wheel on posts, the swastika, and the double ax. The same birds perch very often by themselves on the tree of life (cf. *Fig. 66*), or later on Christian sarcophagi (*Figs. 26-27a-c, 43*). Frequently the tree of life was attacked by animals, and they ate its foliage. Already in Mohenjo-Daro before 3000 B.C. bulls are represented thus (*Fig. 51*—notice the sun wheel signifying the world tree). Consequently hunters protected the sacred tree from hungry animals as does the archer on the Sumerian seal (*Fig. 52*). From this it seems probable that hunting was a holy magic action, a sympathetic rite supporting the gods of life in their rule. These motifs may be traced later in the Sassanian art to hunting scenes in which kings hunt. It must be remembered that the king was the highest priest and the substitute for, the representative of, the god. Thus the Hittite kings called themselves sons of the sun or, to give a Babylonian example, the king Eannetum of Legaš about 2700 B.C. called himself the much loved husband of the goddess Innina. There existed certain rites for the festival days on which the kings were married in the temple of the goddess.

The appearance of symbolic animals in Sassanian art, such as eagles, lions, and leopards may not be explained in any other manner. In the beginning these animals were attributes of the mistress of life; then they became attributes of the substitute of the god, the king. It may be that later the symbolism was weakened and very often forgotten, but the formal tradition endured. Thus even in the Islamic woven fabrics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the symbolism was a conscious one as Karabacek established by Arabic inscriptions. Naturally the weaver may not have had any knowledge of the symbolism at that time, but the artist who designed the patterns must have had it. Falke opposed this view because he was unaware of the old documents concerning symbolism, and he considered the representations as a mere confusion of animals (*Tiersalat*) or as a mere planless collection of game animals (*Tiersammelsurium*). He took his stand simply because he observed these things from a formalistic point of view. An example from German peasant art manifests how long traditions remain alive. In the *Edda* the world ash Yggdrasil is eaten by four stags. The illustration in Figure 147 shows peasant embroidery picturing the world ash standing in a water vessel; this corresponds to the Nordic tradition that the ash grows in a well, and moreover there are four stags depicted eating the leaves.

Much may be said in connection with the relationship of the Cretan sacred tree to lions, birds, and snakes. The relationship of the Cretan tree of life to a ship leads in two directions. On an Armenian-Persian seal there is a design of a wagon of the seventh century B.C.

⁴² S. Reuter, *Germanische Himmelskunde*, München, 1934.

⁴³ O. Montelius, "Das Sonnenrad und das christliche Kreuz," *Mannus, Zeitschr. f. Vorgesch.*, I, 1909, pp. 43 ff.

which carries a ship, and the mast of the latter is formed by a tree. This vehicle represents the "boat-chariot" (*carrus navalis*) which gave the name to the spring festival-carnival (*Fig. 101*). Of the existence of this "boat-chariot" contemporary evidence is derived from Europe.⁴⁴ This again shows the connection with the idea of the course of the year, the drama of the seasons. In the old days peoples symbolized the changing of the seasons in dramatized actions comparing the year to the life of man.⁴⁵ The carnival is the festival of the "spring sun" and of the rebirth of nature.

The other direction leads to the Nordic Bronze Age, which is contemporary with the Cretan designs. The tree also stands on a ship in the rock carvings of the second millennium in Sweden (*Figs. 97-100*). Sometimes the ship has a crew of warriors, suggesting that it represents a ceremonial rite. Almgren established the fact that the rock carvings in Sweden represent seasonal rites. The ship gives the tree of life a cosmic relationship and emphasizes the idea of its being a world tree; in other words it is a symbol of the natural cycle. The ship brings back the god of the sun and of growth.

The Sassanians took over the old Indo-European traditions of the Persians (*Figs. 5, 7*). In his famous book on silk fabrics, Falke⁴⁶ has firmly established this fact and has demonstrated further how Sassanian art was continued by Islamic art. Sassanian fabrics were sold in the West where they were modeled into Christian ritual garments. A good example of one of these fabrics, the Saint Cunebert cloth in Cologne (*Fig. 7*), has designs of mounted archers who as hunters defend the tree of life against the animals that would eat its leaves. Islamic silk manufacturers produced new motifs or patterns of the tree of life revealing a wonderful artistic re-creation of the old Indo-European, Semitic, Christian, and pagan traditions. In spite of the Islamic origin and inspiration these stuffs were almost exclusively used for liturgical garments throughout the Middle Ages. At this time the Christian tendency was toward mysticism, and it has been noted that the myth of the tree of life now became identified with the wood that formed the Cross. Thus in a certain manner the Islamic patterns correspond to Christian symbolism (*Figs. 38-41*).

Many fragments of woven fabrics were found in Egyptian tombs, and Falke has demonstrated their development from the point of view of cultural history. He described this development especially in the silk fabrics made in Antinoë, founded by Hadrian (*Figs. 117-138*). The fabrics begin in a Greek style. At a somewhat later period Greek and Egyptian motifs are intermingled; then ensues the dominance of the Sassanian style as a result of the conquest of Egypt in the year 616 A.D. by Khosrau II. After a short East Roman interregnum, 640 A.D., Egypt fell permanently under Islamic rule. Antinoë, Alexandria, and the Coptic weaving establishments of Akhnim-Panopolis reflect the historical events in the shifting of their styles; and their skill was maintained under Islamic rule, thus explaining the sources of the motifs in Islamic silk stuffs (*Figs. 5-9, 42-50*).

⁴⁴ Lechler, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁴⁵ Almgren, *op. cit.*, pp. 118 ff.

⁴⁶ O. von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, Berlin, 1913, I.



FIG. 51



FIG. 52

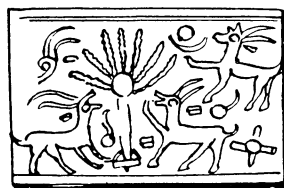


FIG. 53



FIG. 54

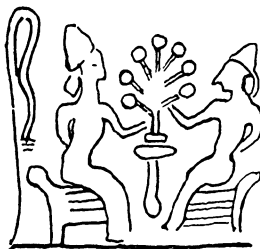


FIG. 55

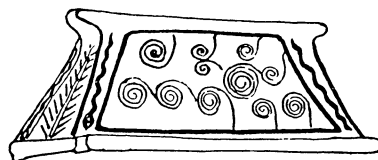


FIG. 56



FIG. 57

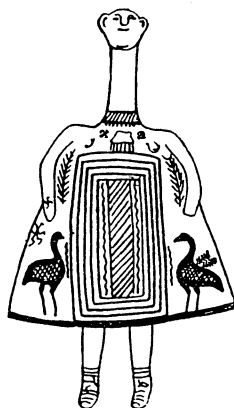


FIG. 58



FIG. 59



FIG. 60

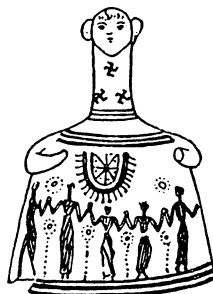


FIG. 61



FIG. 65

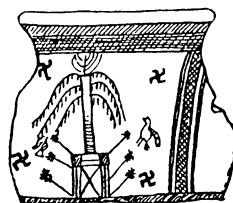


FIG. 66



FIG. 67



FIG. 68



FIG. 69

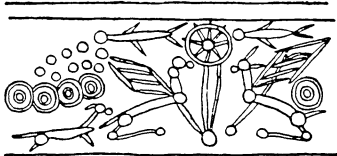


FIG. 70



FIG. 71



FIG. 72



FIG. 73



FIG. 74



FIG. 75



FIG. 76

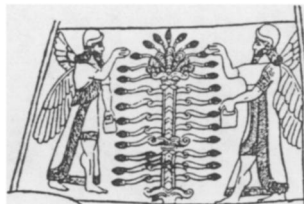


FIG. 77



FIG. 78



FIG. 79



FIG. 80

Falke may be correct in saying that these patterns were woven into the materials for purposes of decoration, but they were likewise symbols. They combined the decorative with the useful. Symbols brought good fortune and represented aid to the bearer and protected him and sanctified him. Figure 42, for example, is a clear proof of the symbolical value of these patterns. Falke speaks only of patterns composed of busts, lions, and dolphins. The bust, however, is that of the goddess Artemis, since her head is decorated with a crown and crescent with nine circles. The dolphins represent the fish shown in Figure 60. The palmetto is symbolical of the tree of life, indicated by its roots being identical with the root of the tree of life and by the typical position of the rampant lions. That even in this time the palmetto represented the tree of life is established by the relief of a tombstone from the Faiyum (*Fig. 43*) in the Berlin Museum. Here the sacred tree is flanked by two peacocks (cf. *Fig. 60*) and a figure of the goddess with a cross in either hand, emphasizing her significance as a bringer of life (cf. *Fig. 64*, with Assyrian palmettos). Other fabrics also testify to the existence of the old symbolic traditions in their representations of holy birds, sun geese, peacocks, horses, or zebras (*Figs. 45-48*). The trees of life are formed of palmettos flanked by two birds in a Greek-Egyptian style (*Fig. 47*). The old tradition of symbolism is clearly evident in the typical form of the root, similar to a reversed heart in its shape, which is divided into three parts because it reaches down into three springs or into three wells as does the world ash Yggdrasil.

Falke contradicts himself when he emphasizes the fact⁴⁷ that in the same workshop at the same time Christian, pagan, and secular patterns were used. Thus he mentions as a special symbolic motif the scene of the education of the god Dionysus. Opposing Karabacek he questions the possibility of pagan motifs in Egypt about 600 A.D., when all Egyptians were good Christians. In my opinion this indicates a complete misunderstanding of human superstitions and their persistence. However, Falke did not have the opportunity to use Jung's *Germanische Götter in der christlichen Kunst*, which offers plentiful material of Romanesque art illustrating the long continued existence of old pagan tradition. Jung brings, in addition to Romanesque pieces, examples of clerical art of the fifteenth century, which add further proof. As late as the thirteenth century the bishop of Fulda forbade the people, under penalty of death, to take part in pagan sacrificial rites on the mountain of Numburg.⁴⁸ This occurred in Germany, but the evidence indicates that it might well have happened also in Egypt.

In order to prove the existence of symbolism in textiles, may I offer two examples? Falke explains as being a simple decoration the so-called quadriga fabric of Brussels, seventh century A.D. (*Fig. 8*). But the technique of composition is completely identical with that of Greek vase paintings on which it is clear that the sun god Apollo is intentionally represented.⁴⁹ The similarity is so perfect that it extends to even such details as the unreal wheels. Strzygowski is correct in stating that this is a performance of Helios. The crown of seven beams speaks for

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴⁸ Lechler, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

⁴⁹ Almgren, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

the sun god in the same manner as the lifting of the arms, which would be impossible for a circus driver. Both hands are lifted, and the fingers are spread like those pictured of the gods of light from neolithic times on (*Figs. 20, 121*). The two whips do not prove that this is an ungodlike driver. Even today the switching of a whip is a holy action in peasant rites, as in the beginning of spring, Easter, midsummer, and yule.⁵⁰ Chariot races, which are already pictured in the second millennium B.C. in Sweden, are a cultic rite which endured until the time of the Roman emperors.⁵¹

The purpose of the races arranged during the solstice or beginning of autumn was to select the best horse in order that it might be sacrificed to the sun god, *ob frugum eventum*, to secure a plentiful harvest. In classic Greek times on the island of Rhodes a complete quadriga was hurled into the sea as a sacrifice every year. On the quadriga fabric a sun wheel, with eight spokes to emphasize its godlike character, is added apparently as a determining factor in the same manner as on the pictures of the tree of life. The Dioscuri fabric of Maastricht, 600 A.D., should convince any skeptic (*Fig. 9*). That the warriors are really the Dioscuri is apparent from the fact that both are standing upon the top of a column or post, the old German cultic wooden post, the Irminsul, posed in the wreaths of the year and flanked by sacred trees. The double-headed Roman god Janus represents the course of the year in the same manner as the "double godhead" of the Dioscuri. In the instance of Janus the function of guiding the year is symbolized by a circle divided by diameter in two parts.⁵² The cult of the Dioscuri bloomed again, especially from 300 A.D. on in the Roman Empire, because after the disappearance of the old legionary system Germanic regiments took over the guarding of the Roman provinces and were paid in land, food, etc. Even the war office had officially the name *fiscus barbaricus* ("office of the barbarians"). Gautier has clearly pointed out these facts.⁵³

At the end of classical antiquity intellectualism had pressed back symbolic performances; but the latter broke through again with the victory of mystical Christianity (260 A.D.) and with the barbarian, consequently not the Roman, military as the main political factor. Corresponding to this there was a return in the field of economics from money economics to barter economics.

In 226 A.D. the Sassanian regime, founded by Ardashīr, began the development of Sassanian art. This art continued not only old Persian but also Mesopotamian and Assyrian traditions, as is reported by the Arab writer Maṣūdi. The Sassanian king Shāpūr II transplanted silk weavers to Persia in 360 A.D. Even in the sixth century Greek-Syrian silk weavers were brought to Persia, which after 626 A.D., definitely in 640 A.D., fell into the hands of the Arabs. Now began the tremendous increase of Islamic silk weaving, expounding the old motifs of the tree of life shown by examples in the accompanying illustrations. How stubbornly the old

⁵⁰ P. Sartori, *Sitte und Brauch*, Stuttgart, 1910-14, Vols. I-III; Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des Deutschen Aberglaubens*, Leipzig, 1927.

⁵¹ H. Rosén, "Sacrifice of Horses and Horse Cult,"

Formvännen, Stockholm, 1913; R. F. Johannsson, *ibid.*

⁵² O. Huth, *Janus*, Bonn, 1932.

⁵³ Gautier (trans. into German and ed. by Lechler) *Geiserich, König der Wandalen*, Frankfurt, 1934, p. 71.

Babylonian-Assyrian sacred tree, handed over by the Sassanians, was preserved in its formal details in the best manner possible by the prayer rugs, which in fact prolong the old form of asherah (*Figs. 83-85*). The prayer rugs were for each Muḥammadan an especially meaningful symbol because the point of the prayer niche on the rugs during the ceremony was pointed toward Mecca. The Sīdra in the niche reminded the praying man of the desired goal in heaven (*Figs. 1-2*).

Ward⁵⁴ offers a remarkable sample of living symbolism concerning the sacred tree. Rabbi Baba, a member of the Nestorians of Urumia, who wrote a complete dictionary of the Nestorian-Syriac dialect, told him that the seven-branched tree on the prayer rugs represents the fortune of life: the lower fruit, light green, means the ignorance of childhood; red, the stirring of blood; black, trouble, etc. Ward concludes that the sacred tree may be a tree of gifts of fortune. This conforms with the reported Hittite tree of Telebinus in Figure 53, where also appears a horn in connection with the tree. The horn was later, in Roman times, the symbol of the goddess Fortuna.

After the breakdown of the Roman Empire two factors were essential pillars in the reconstruction leading to the medieval world. As already pointed out, these factors were represented by the Christian Church and by the military caste of barbarians.

Necessarily the growth of a new system of ideas must have been affected materially by both of these elements. Only from this point of view is it possible to understand the appearance in Christian times of not only the symbols of the old Orient, but also the North European symbols with a partly transferred meaning. Even as late as 1000 A.D. there is found in Sweden during the time of its conversion to Christianity the same absorptive process of symbolism (*Figs. 22-30*).

The midsummer post, the "yule rusk" of today, is a Swedish folk custom. It is a sun wheel decorated with green shrubbery attached to the top of a post, either planted postlike or carried in processions. This custom was common to all Germanic tribes.⁵⁵ Mention may be made of the "queste" in Questenberg in the Harz Mountains (*Fig. 23*), which represents a Pentecostal custom. That the carrying around of sun disks attached to sticks is very old is demonstrated by a comparison with the Boeotian Greek figure in Figure 61. On the raiment of the goddess is pictured a cultic dance between sun disks on sticks obviously carried around before the dance began. Similar sticks with disks are used today in Germany in the same manner, at first in the procession; and later during the following folk dance they are planted in the ground, as for example every year in the festivity called *sommengewinn* ("winning of the summer"), which occurs on Laetare Sunday at Eisenach, Thuringia. It is obvious that the "queste" or midsummer post really represents the tree of life = world tree = tree of the year because the Cross of Christ clearly is designated as "queste," midsummer post or tree. Figures 24 to 30 demonstrate this development.

Thus it may be recognized that the design of Akhnim-Panopolis, Egypt, sixth century A.D.,

⁵⁴ Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

⁵⁵ Grimm, *op. cit.*; Sartori, *op. cit.*

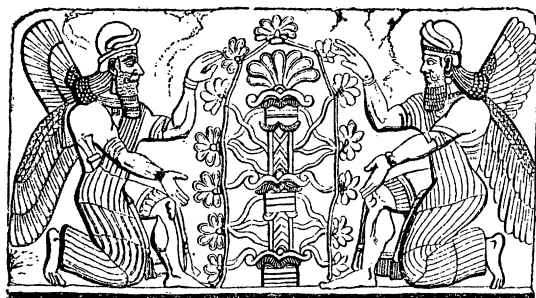


FIG. 81



FIG. 82

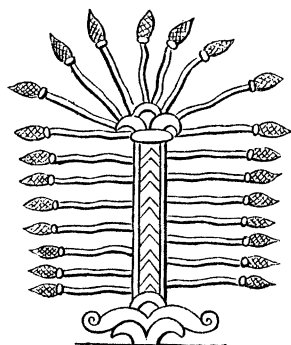


FIG. 83

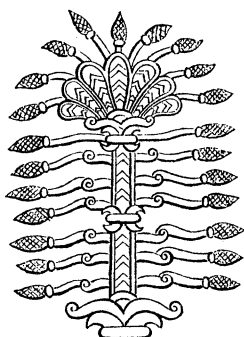


FIG. 84

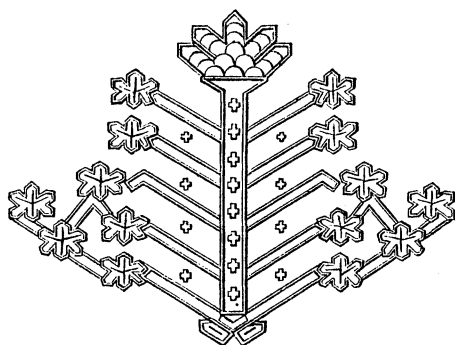


FIG. 85

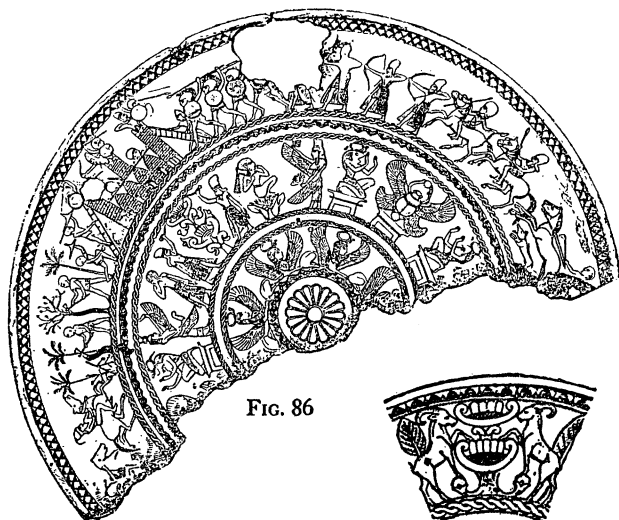


FIG. 86

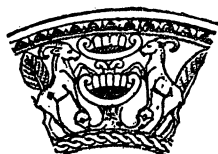


FIG. 89



FIG. 87

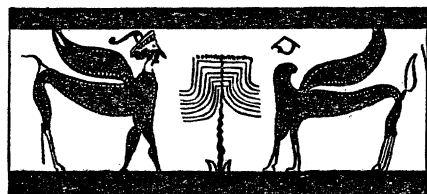


FIG. 88

is a decorative but symbolic formation of the tree of life cross (*Fig. 27*). The importance of the idea of the tree of life in Christian dramatic and epic performances must not be forgotten. Such a miniature as is represented in *Figure 31* is a direct proof of the foregoing statement because the accompanying text is directly related to the legend of the wood of the Cross: "The Church offers to mankind the blooming tree of life of the cross." Only thus does it become comprehensible that Christ is pictured sitting in the top of a tree, and the Holy Mary with the Child on the "wild thorn bush" (*Figs. 10-11*).⁵⁶ This connection with the tree of life did not originate in medieval times, as is demonstrated by such a picture as *Figure 12*, showing the Holy Mary with the Child, and before them the three Magi in adoration; behind the Holy Mary stands the tree of life. Here is a thread leading back to an old Babylonian belief, as is shown in *Figure 14*, in which the mother of the gods with the godlike child Tammuz⁵⁷ sits before a sacred tree accepting libations. Similar pictures are found in Egypt, and it may be mentioned in passing that it has been supposed for many years that the Nagada-Egyptians derived from the Luvians in Asia Minor.⁵⁸

Here I may relate a personal experience of last spring (1936) in France. I was making an excursion to Meudon, near Paris. In the forest of Meudon are five dolmens of the neolithic period on the top of a mountain around a menhir. In the center of this site is also a huge old oak tree, and contemplating its wonderful top I discovered on its highest branches a figure of the Holy Mary with the Child, carved in wood. The peasants told me that when the weather has spoiled the figure they replace it with a new one, and that this is an old tradition of the place. This shows again how deeply the cult of the tree is fixed in the folk mind and feelings. Even Caesar learned this two thousand years ago when his soldiers refused to obey his command to cut down the holy oaks of the Gauls near Marseilles.⁵⁹

The church tried to divert the old pagan feeling, as may be illustrated by one example from Germany. At Lehnin near Brandenburg an old church of pilgrimage is built over the trunk of a holy oak, and the stump of the oak is directly before the altar. Charlemagne built a church of Saint Peter at Obermarsberg over the place where he had had cut down a holy oak which the Saxons called Irminsul, the column of the world.⁶⁰

The old festivity of the Merichslinde at Nordhausen shows that the cult of the tree as observed at Meudon existed also in other parts of Europe. The picture of this festivity, shown in Wirth,⁶¹ contains highly original features. Wreaths decorated with ribbons hang in the holy tree representing the tree of life; as in Germanic times it is a linden tree. The same decoration with wreaths is found pictured on Etruscan graves, for example, on a grave of 550 B.C.,

⁵⁶ The author wishes to express his appreciation to Mrs. Adèle C. Weibel, of the Detroit Institute of Arts, for information as to the existence of this picture and, further, for very material aid in the field of textiles.

⁵⁷ Langdon, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁵⁸ E. Forrer, "Stratification des Langues et des Peuples dans le Proche-Orient Préhistorique," *Journ. Asia-*

tique, 1930, pp. 242 ff.

⁵⁹ W. Mannhardt, *Der Baumkultus der Germanen*, Göttingen, 1875; W. Mannhardt, *Antike Wald und Feldkulte* (new ed.), Leipzig, 1904.

⁶⁰ Knieving, "Wo stand die von Karl zerstörte Irminsul," *Mannus, Zeitschr. f. Vorgesch.*, 1936, p. 333.

⁶¹ Wirth, *op. cit.*, Fig. 143.

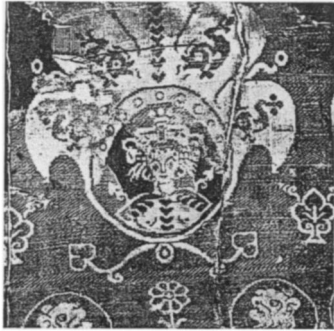


FIG. 42



FIG. 43

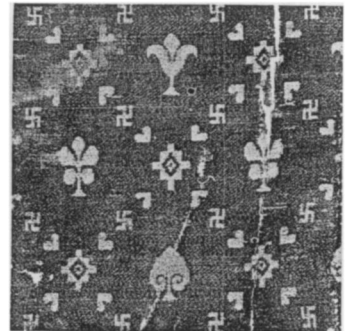


FIG. 44

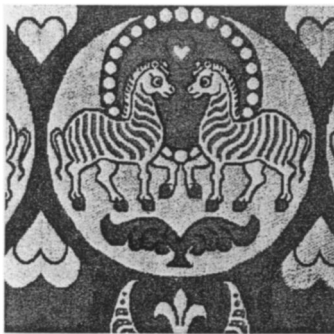


FIG. 45



FIG. 46



FIG. 47



FIG. 48



FIG. 49



FIG. 50



FIG. 64



FIG. 62



FIG. 63

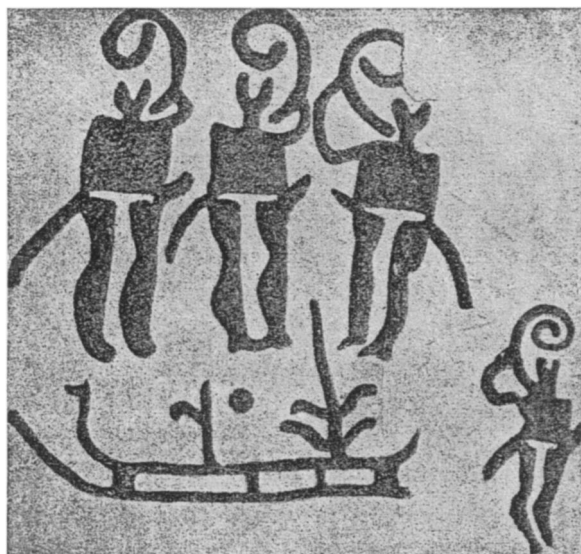


FIG. 97

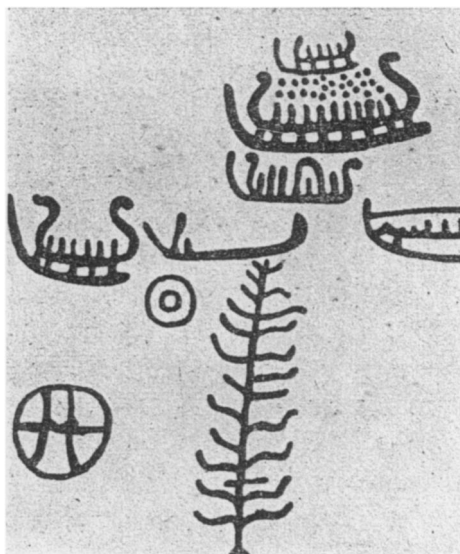


FIG. 98

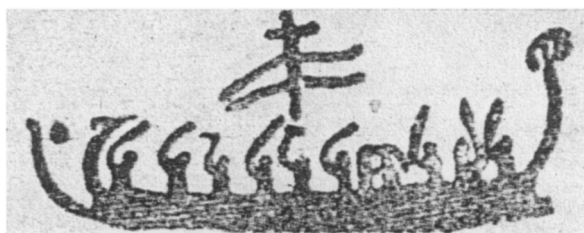


FIG. 100



FIG. 101

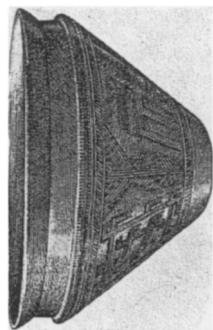


FIG. 128

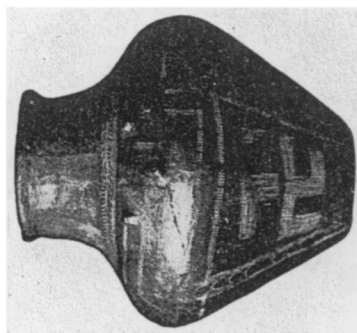


FIG. 131

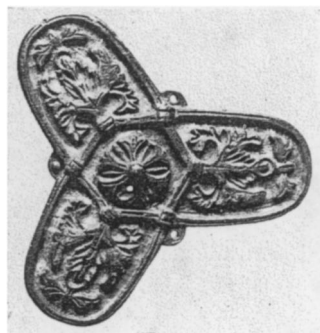


FIG. 134

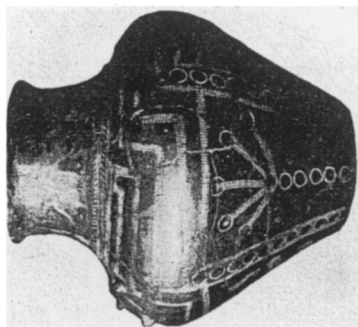


FIG. 129



FIG. 132



FIG. 135

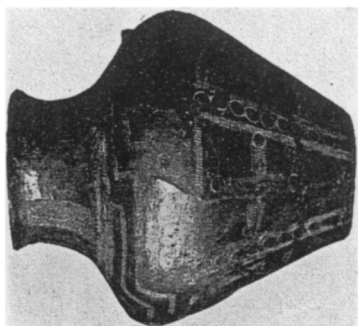


FIG. 130



FIG. 133

Tomba della Caccia e Pesca near Corneto with designs of carnival festivity, or on the Tomba dei Vasi Dipini with dancers before trees with wreaths. Besides the wreaths the Merichsclinde is decorated with shining globes arranged in a circle which corresponds to the old symbol of the sun wheel with spokes, indicating the sun god or year. The hut made of bent twigs in which the "Mother Earth" sits may also be observed in this picture. Here it may be permissible to suggest that this is the old Indo-European fantasy, since this hut of bent twigs occurs in the folk customs of all Europe, and the same thing is found on several old Babylonian-Assyrian seals on which the god sits on a twig hut designed like a niche. A comparison with seals of this kind⁶² indicates why the Assyrian tree of life often shows a very peculiar arrangement of an arch and a surface covered with a sort of wickerwork. These observations will be a proof for the fact that the Assyrian asherah is the sacred tree that symbolizes the course of the year. This may not be surprising. By studying various symbols it may be learned that they have a constant tradition from the Stone Ages to the Middle Ages; for example, the sun wheel, the swastika, the tree of life, the fish, the cross, the so-called anchor, the ship, the ship chariot, the ax, the spiral, and the labyrinth, to mention only those symbols referred to in this paper, continually reoccur.

Thus it may be surmised that the Islamic mihrāb is derived from the twig arch or hut. This idea would conform with what has already been said concerning the framework around the Assyrian asherah.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1.—Anatolian prayer rug, Asia Minor. A common example from the middle of the nineteenth century. The form of the tree of life is still recognizable. (W. Grote-Hasenbalg, *Meisterstücke orientalischer Knüpfkunst*, Berlin, 1921, Pl. 7 [5].)

Fig. 2.—Mihrāb of Djāmi' al-Khāṣakī, ninth century, Omayyad. In the niche a palmetto trunk forms a tree of life in the shape of a palm tree. The trunk is carved and depicts a world column on a water vessel. The capital of the column supports another water vessel. The vessels symbolize the water of life. (F. Sarre, *Archaeologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebeit*, Berlin, 1911, III, Pl. XLV.)

Fig. 3.—Sorceress textile in Vich, Spain, made in Sicily after 1150 A.D. The tree of life, similar to the Assyrian asherah (Figs. 83-84), is in an arch flanked by two peacocks. This composition, already noted in Early Christian reliefs, was later developed into patterns as in Figure 39, where the tree is transformed into the tail of the peacock. (O. von Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, Berlin, 1913, I, Fig. 209.)

Fig. 4.—Carved wood Qur'ān stand, dated 1360 A.D. In a niche the tree of life is represented as a cypress. (M. S. Dimand, *A Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts*, New York, 1930, Fig. 41.)

Figs. 5-6.—Sassanian silk fabric made before 640 A.D. The Sassanian king Yazdegerd, personified with Ahuramazda, is shown in connection with mythological Zoroastrian elements based on ancient Persian tradition. He struggles against Ahriman, his enemy, and in doing so

⁶² Ward, *op. cit.*, Figs. 399-400.



FIG. 90



FIG. 91



FIG. 92



FIG. 93



FIG. 94

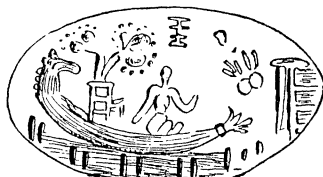


FIG. 95

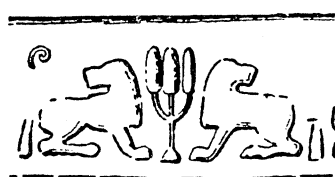


FIG. 96

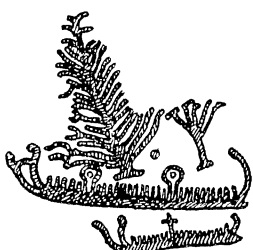


FIG. 99

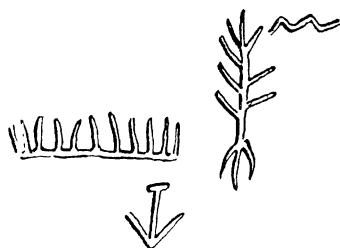


FIG. 102

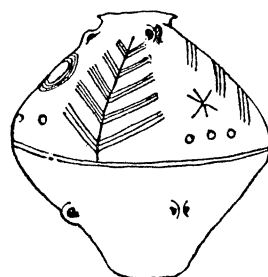


FIG. 103

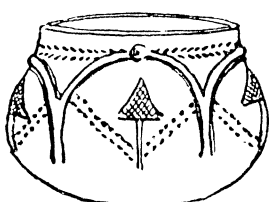


FIG. 104

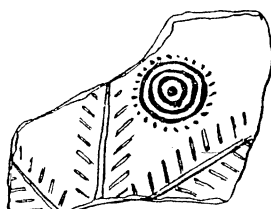


FIG. 105

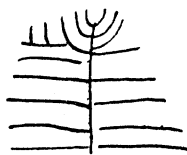


FIG. 106



FIG. 107



FIG. 108



FIG. 109

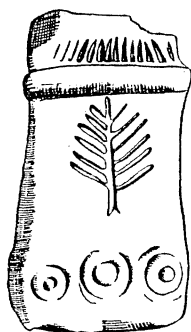


FIG. 110

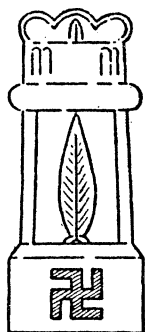


FIG. 111



FIG. 112



FIG. 113



FIG. 114

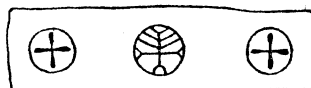


FIG. 115



FIG. 116



FIG. 117



FIG. 118

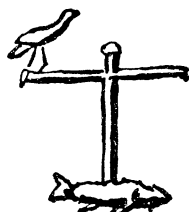


FIG. 119

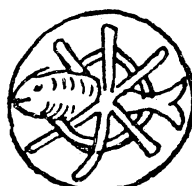


FIG. 120

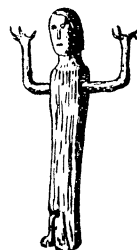


FIG. 121



FIG. 122



FIG. 123



FIG. 124



FIG. 125



FIG. 126



FIG. 127

protects the tree of life. The Babylonian hero Gilgamish has a similar mythological background. Ahuramazda is in the tree blessing the fighter; in Figure 6 he is represented as a bird. (Cf. *Figs. 14-15, 33-34, 143-144*; von Falke, *op. cit.*, *Figs. 105-106.*)

Fig. 7.—Sassanian stuff from the shrine of Saint Cunebert, Cologne, 600 A.D. Archer protecting the tree of life.

Fig. 8.—Quadriga stuff in Brussels, seventh century, Alexandria, Egypt. Apollo with a crown of seven beams stands in his chariot. Connecting the wreaths are ornamentally designed sun wheels with eight "plant-spokes"; in the space between them is a chariot with two horses. The wagon of the moon is symbolized by the crescent tiara. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 74.)

Fig. 9.—The Dioscuri stuff in Maastricht, Netherlands, seventh century, Alexandria, Egypt. In the circle of the year, symbolized by a wreath, stand the Dioscuri. The sun wheel has four ornamental spokes. In the space between the wreaths is a tree ("tree of the year"). Under the column, the world pillar, two bulls are being led to sacrifice. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 77.)

Fig. 10.—The Son of God in a tree, Thaulow Museum, Kiel. From a carved wood high altar by Hans Brueggemann, 1540 A.D. Christ as the new tree of life. (H. Wirth, *Die Heilige Urschrift der Menschheit*, Leipzig, 1931-35, Pl. 157.)

Fig. 11.—The Holy Mary with the Child, by Nicolas Froment, 1475, Aix Cathedral, France. *Le Buisson ardent* ("the burning thorn bush") is an ecclesiastical interpretation of the idea of the tree of life. Behind the Holy Mary and bush are flaming rays. Note that the bush stands on a hilltop, the world mountain. (Cf. *Figs. 36, 24 ff.*; L. Brehier, *L'Art chrétien*, Paris, 1928, p. 376, Pl. XII.)

Fig. 12.—Old Christian gem. The adoration of the Magi. The Holy Mary sitting with the Child before the tree of life. (Wirth, *op. cit.*, Pl. 145, Fig. 8.)

Fig. 13.—The Babylonian goddess with the child before the sacred tree. Similar to the Egyptian pictures of Isis with the child Horus. There is also a series of seal carvings from Babylonia with the mother goddess and the godlike child Tammuz. In the Near East the cult of the mother goddess flourished until Christian times. This idea is a common Indo-European one, and the Christian belief is only a transformed continuation of this old religious complex. (W. H. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia*, Washington, 1910, Fig. 404.)

Fig. 14.—A miniature from the Psalter of Landgraf Hermann of Thuringia, 1217 A.D. Behind the head of Abraham, with Lazarus on his lap, is a halo from which grows a symbolic tree of life or world tree. It is designed in the style of a heraldic lily; in the lower leaves to the right is the sun, to the left the moon. On the upper leaves over three oaklike leaves are three heads which certainly represent the Holy Trinity. Thus this tree is only a continuation of the old Irminsul, the world-pillar-tree. (H. Swarzenski, *Vorgotische Miniaturen*, Leipzig, 1927, Fig. 75.)

Fig. 15.—Christ in the tree of life on an Early Christian gem, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Christ as a lamb in a circle, sun wheel, with his monogram XP, which is only a Christian interpretation of the six spokes of the old sun wheel, as Montelius pointed out. Under the tree top fly two birds; the trunk is flanked by two animals. The tree stands on pyramid-like steps.

Fig. 16.—A relief from San Marco, Venice, seventh century. On an altar over the cross (T = stauros and on the top of it the Latin cross) is, in a sun ring or wheel, Christ symbolized as a lamb. On both sides of the altar the twelve Apostles as lambs are flanked by palmlike trees of life, each between two stylized mountains (cf. Fig. 126).

Fig. 17.—A processional cross, ca. 1200 A.D., Denmark. The cross, formed as the ancient holy sun wheel with four spokes, is interpreted as the new tree of life. Evidence of this is given by the branches with leaves and blossoms. On these boughs are the symbols of the four evangelists. Already in Ezek. 1: 10 the same animals are described as a vision. These processional crosses were very commonly used in Christian rites; best examples of them are in the possession of the cathedral of Hildesheim. Here the sectors of the sun wheel are also filled with ornaments of leaves. (O. Montelius, *Die älteren Kulturperioden*, Stockholm, 1907, Fig. 1140.)

Fig. 18.—An Assyrian altar, 900 B.C. Men, with helmets decorated with sun wheels, carry sticks surmounted by sun wheels with four and eight spokes. In the midst stands the adoring king. The Christian processional crosses are to be traced back to these ancient, pre-Christian, Indo-European rites. In Sweden sun wheels of baked clay were used as processional crosses in the Neolithic age before 2000 B.C. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 1300.)

Fig. 19.—Saint Godehard Church, Hildesheim, Germany, twelfth century. This Romanesque capital shows the tree of life between two eating animals flanked by figures in the position of imparting a blessing.

Fig. 20.—The Resurrection of Christ on a Romanesque tympanum, 1200 A.D., Elstertrebnitz, Germany. Christ in the typical hand position comes out of a step pyramid on the top of which is an arched niche (the grave). On the left is the lily-like tree of life; on the right, Christ on the Cross. This is flanked by two worshipers; one of them has a lily, the plant of life, in his hand; behind him is the pentagram as a wheel. Over the head of Christ and also behind his head soars a sun wheel with four spokes; in the right corner is the Holy Bird.

Fig. 21.—A relief of the thirteenth century, Cathedral of Trier. This tree symbolizes the tree of life as the tree of the cosmic year (death and life) or Irminsul, column of universality. On the left, human heads with wings; on the right, skulls. On the left, fresh leaves; on the right, withering leaves. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 1270.)

Fig. 22.—Swedish "yule rusk," midsummer custom. The sun wheel on a stick with green shrubbery representing the course of the year.

Fig. 23.—The "queste" on the top of a mountain, Questenberg, Germany. The tree of life symbolized by wreaths forming a sun wheel.

Fig. 24.—A runic gravestone in Gotland, Sweden, fifteenth century. The cross formed as a sun wheel with five swastikas. The leaves show that the same idea is depicted in Figure 23. The cross is identified with the tree of life, tree of the world, "queste." The cross stands on a hill with steps. (G. Lechler, "Kreuz Hakenkreuz Irminsul," *Mannus, Zeitschrift für Vorgeschichte*, XXVII, 1935, Fig. 31.)

Fig. 25.—Runic gravestone in Gotland, Sweden, 1449 A.D. The cross as a sun wheel, on

the ends of the spokes stylized sprouts indicating the cross as the world tree. The cross stands on a stepped mountain. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 29.)

Fig. 26.—The cross as the tree of the year on a sarcophagus, sixth century, Lateran Museum, Rome. The Latin cross, with two birds on the horizontal beam, is crowned with a sun wheel, the spokes of which are transformed into Christ's monogram, XP. The circle is composed of wreaths.

Fig. 27.—The cross as the tree of life. A design of a silk fabric by Zacharias of Akhnim-Panopolis, Egypt, sixth century. The leaves are made of palmettos; the eight spokes of the sun wheel or wreaths of the year are also formed like plants. The trunk of the cross-tree is decorated with hearts. Under the cross two figures carrying sticks with leaves. (von Falke, *op. cit.*, Fig. 61.)

Fig. 27*a*.—A sarcophagus, Saint Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, fifth century. The cross flanked by two trees of life with pigeons, and flanked also by cross rosettes.

Figs. 27*b*, *c*.—A sarcophagus of Saint Rinaldo, fifth century, Cathedral, Ravenna. The sun wheel with six spokes, interpreted as XP, and with inscribed AΘ, is accompanied by pigeons and an ornamental tree of life, a vine stem. Two lambs flank the cross, identified by a loop with the monogram of Christ, XP. The tree of life is represented, according to Gen. 9: 20, by a vine stem growing from a water vessel.

Fig. 28.—Swedish gravestone, fourteenth century. The cross as the tree of life. On a hill stands the Greek cross crowning a trunk with three leaves (trinity). (O. Montelius, "Das Sonnenrad und das christliche Kreuz," *Mannus, Zeitschrift für Vorgeschichte*, I, 1909, Fig. 67.)

Fig. 29.—Swedish gravestone, fourteenth century. The cross is formed out of stylized branches. Thus the cross represents the tree of life. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 69.)

Fig. 30.—Swedish gravestone, 1316 A.D. The cross as a symbolic tree. The branches form hearts. The heart is a Christian symbol for the love of the Lord. In the crossing point of the beams is a swastika. Three crosses on the top of the tree represent the Holy Trinity. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 70.)

Fig. 31.—Miniature from the "Praise of the Holy Cross," Regensburg, twelfth century. The cross as the blooming tree of life. The text reads: "The Church offers to mankind the blooming tree of life of the cross." (Swarzenski, *op. cit.*, Fig. 59.)

Fig. 32.—Illustration from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, chap. 64. The sun on the top of the tree of life, to which a dead man is praying.

Fig. 33.—Illustration from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, chap. 63*a*. The tree of the mother goddess Isis giving the water of life to the soul. The tree is growing out of the depth of the water symbolized by the ideogram: "water in the square."

Fig. 34*a*.—Osiris hidden in his pillar. The pillar represents the heavenly tree, the world tree. (M. Mueller, *Mythology of All Races, Egyptian*, Boston, 1928, XII, Fig. 83.)

Fig. 34*b*.—Osiris in the celestial tree, National Museum, Cairo. The tree between two obelisks (cf. Fig. 126) representing time. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 84.)

Fig. 34c.—The cat god killing the serpent at the foot of the heavenly tree. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 104.)

Fig. 35.—A wall painting of the nineteenth dynasty (1400–70 B.C.). The mother goddess sitting in the top of the sacred tree giving the water of life. The tree stands on a mountain top (cf. *Figs. 24–30*), the inside of which is filled with “the water of the depth.” (Wirth, *op. cit.*, Pl. 165, Fig. 5.)

Figs. 36–37.—Egyptian pillars with lotus capitals, Figure 37—Old Kingdom; Figure 36—New Kingdom. Symbolizing in this manner the world pillar or world tree, the holy tree of Nut or Hathor who has the surname “mistress of the holy tree”; she corresponds with Isis the all-mother (Montelius, *Die älteren Kulturperioden*, Figs. 356, 354.)

Fig. 38.—Persian silk fabric of the twelfth century (according to Koechlin and Migeon), Musée des Arts décoratifs, Paris. A stylized tree of life is flanked by double-headed eagles soaring over lions. The Arabic inscription reads: “Let us praise the Lord.” According to Falke this fabric is Hispano-Moresque or Siculo-Arab. These motifs were taken over and imitated by the Lucca manufacturers in Italy of the thirteenth century, where the symbolism became formalized. (von Falke, *op. cit.*, I, Fig. 202.)

Fig. 39.—Hispano-Moresque silk textile, twelfth century, Saint Severin, Toulouse, France. Peacocks flanking a lance-shaped tree of life. Wonderful deep red and light green patterns alternate. The birds and the springing or standing animals as well as the peacocks and tree of life reflect a Sassanian tradition. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 205.)

Fig. 40.—A copy of Islamic motifs, Lucca, thirteenth century. The tree of life between griffins and hinds obviously copied from a textile of Hispano-Moresque origin. (*Ibid.*, II, Fig. 276.)

Fig. 41.—A late Hispano-Moresque silk fabric, fifteenth century, Musée de Cluny, Paris. The tree of life as the world pillar flanked by two lions with crowns. Religious motifs changed into worldly symbols of power. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 171.)

Fig. 42.—A silk fabric from Antinoë, sixth century A.D., Musée de Lyons. Artemis with a crescent over her head is depicted within a palmetto, decorated with dolphins. Below are two lions. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 40.)

Fig. 43.—A gravestone from the Faiyum, Egypt, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Mother goddess with palmetto tree of life, two crosses, and two peacocks.

Fig. 44.—A silk fabric from Antinoë, fifth century, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Three different kinds of trees are surrounded by crosses with four points, eight spokes, swastikas, and hearts. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 32.)

Fig. 45.—Antinoë textile, sixth century, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Two horses (zebras) in a circle before the sun hearts, and the tree of life in the form of a plant ornament (cf. *Fig. 49*). (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 44.)

Fig. 46.—Antinoë textile, sixth century, Aachen Museum. Peacocks before a sun disk with a lily above, flanked by pillars, the tree of life, world column. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 43.)

Fig. 47.—Antinoë textile, sixth century, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. The tree of life flanked by two birds (holy ibis). (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 45.)

Fig. 48.—Antinoë textile, late Greek style, fifth century, Sens Cathedral, France. Pattern with rosettes in addition to griffins and ducks flanking the tree of life. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 55.)

Fig. 49.—Fabrics by Zacharias, Akhnim-Panopolis, Egypt. Coptic, sixth century. The tree of life in a circle. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 59.)

Fig. 50.—A silk textile from Alexandria, sixth century, Maastricht. In a circle the Dioscuri as archers. On the bottom are lions; on the top, the tree of life. (*Ibid.*, I, Fig. 73.)

Fig. 51.—A seal from Mohenjo-Daro, India, 3000 B.C. The tree of life with two bulls or bull-headed snakes, eating; on the right, the symbol of the year (sun wheel with six spokes); in the midst, a pillar; on the left, a fish. (J. Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization*, London, 1931, III, Fig. 387.)

Fig. 52.—A seal found in Susa, Persia, lowest stratum, third millennium. A figure attacking a springing antelope before a tree of life with a sun wheel of six spokes. (G. Wilke, *Kulturbeziehungen zwischen Indien Orient und Europa*, Leipzig, 1913, Fig. 144d.)

Fig. 53.—Seal, hoard of Courion, Cyprus. A sacred tree from which goats are eating. Beside the tree are sun and crescent, horn and cross. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 144e.)

Fig. 54.—The "temptation," Babylonian seal. A man and woman sitting beside the tree of life; the snake behind the woman. (Ward, *op. cit.*, Fig. 386.)

Fig. 55.—Late Hittite seal. Man and woman before the tree of life, with seven branches, standing on a pillar, indicating the world tree. Behind the woman is the snake. (Wirth, *op. cit.*, Pl. 173, Fig. 5.)

Fig. 56.—The lid of a sarcophagus, Crete, ninth century. Snakes flanking the tree of life. Spirals. (Wilke, *op. cit.*, Fig. 126e.)

Fig. 57.—From a decoration on a bowl, Susa, late period. The tree of life and the serpent, flanked by sun and moon. (S. Langdon, *Mythology of All Races*, Boston, 1931, V, Fig. 68.)

Fig. 58.—Boeotian clay figure, 700 B.C. The Greek mistress of life with tree symbols, geese, comb (holy symbol), sun whirls, swastika, and double ax (on the back). (G. Lechler, *Vom Hakenkreuz die Geschichte eines Symbols*, Leipzig, 1920, Fig. 44, 2.)

Fig. 59.—Vase painting, Thera, Greece, eighth century B.C. Mistress of life accompanied by a lion. Swastika, sun disks, and cross with four circles. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 45, 10.)

Fig. 60.—A vase painting, Theben, Boeotian, eighth century B.C. Mistress of life with a fish on her lap. A perfect representation of her omnipotence (see text). (*Ibid.*, Fig. 45, 11.)

Fig. 61.—A clay figure of the mistress of life, Boeotian, eighth century B.C., with swastika and eight spokes. On her skirt a cultic dance between sticks surmounted by sun disks. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 44, 4.)

Figs. 62–63.—Seals, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Persian mistress of life. Tree of life, snake, subdued animals, and sphinxes. (von Falke, *op. cit.*, Figs. 131, 132.)

Fig. 64.—Etruscan mistress of life, seventh century B.C., with four lions, four snakes,

two hares, and an eagle standing on the tree of life. (R. Forrer, *Urgeschichte des Europäers*, Stuttgart, 1908, Pl. 155.)

Fig. 65.—Vase painting, Greece, seventh century B.C. The tree of life between two mountains or obelisks (cf. Fig. 34b) flanked by two geese. Sun disks, sun wheel, and swastika. (Lechler, *op. cit.*, Fig. 46, 22.)

Fig. 66.—Altar with the tree of life, birds, and swastika. Cyprus, seventh century B.C. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 48, 4.)

Fig. 67.—Syro-Hittite seal. The tree with two fish and winged genii. (Ward, *op. cit.*, Fig. 960.)

Fig. 68.—Assyrian seal. The god Ashur in the winged sun soaring over the world tree, a column on the top of which a branching tree is embowered by an arch of wickerwork. Two priests of Ea or Ea himself in a fish disguise. Behind a worshiper Marduk kills an ostrich under a star with light spokes. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 681.)

Fig. 69.—Assyrian seal. Trinity in winged sun, with hands or three-pointed rays, sun star (*ilu*), moon, cross, priest of Ea in a fish disguise, a worshiper. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 682.)

Fig. 70.—Syro-Hittite seal. An asherah, a trunk supporting a sun wheel with eight spokes, the tree of the year. Two fish, two griffins, five sun disks, and seven stars (Pleiades). (*Ibid.*, Fig. 991.)

Fig. 71.—Late Assyrian seal. The sacred tree with the winged sun and fish; on the left, the mother goddess; on the right, the god with the ax, Pleiades, moon, and worshiper. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 680.)

Fig. 72.—Bronze bowl from the palace of Nimrud (1100 B.C.) The world pillar supports a sun (disk with uraeus snakes) flanked by two worshipers and sphinxes. The world pillar stands under nine globes supporting waves. The arch above rests on two pillars. In the middle the sun with uraeus snakes over the arch; the winged sun and uraeus snakes flanked by rows of swans. This "world system" is flanked by two columns with winged scarabs, with the sun and uraeus snakes, which are not shown. The motif is repeated four times; a rosette encircles the middle part (the sun with concentric circles of palmettos). (Montelius, *op. cit.*, Fig. 1004.)

Fig. 73.—Assyrian seal. The tree of life, its top with the sun as world pillar; two winged genii with buckets. (Ward, *op. cit.*, Fig. 693.)

Fig. 74.—Assyrian seal. The god Ashur as a winged sun carried by two genii who bear in their hands three-pointed twigs corresponding to the three-pointed beams of the winged sun; the moon and an eye. The world pillar with the sun, the rays of which are poppy stalks. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 696.)

Fig. 75.—Assyrian seal. The god Ashur in the winged sun over the asherah, a pillar bearing a palmetto, surrounded by a circle of rays. The beams (streams of the water of life) coming from the winged sun reach the buckets of the genii who wear cross-decorated helmets. Bird. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 692.)

Fig. 76.—Assyrian seal. Two bull men bear the winged disk with the god Ashur. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 685.)

Fig. 77.—Embroidery from a raiment, Nimrud, 1100 B.C. Two winged genii with buckets for the asherah. (W. Schultz, *Zeitrechnung und Weltordnung mit ihren übereinstimmenden Grundzuegen bei den Indern Iraniern* . . . , Leipzig, 1924, Fig. 60.)

Fig. 78.—Marduk fights with the dragon. Beside the mountain, from which Marduk is emerging, stands the world pillar with the tree of life, on the top of which sits an adoring monkey; beside the pillar is an antelope. (Ward, *op. cit.*, Fig. 571.)

Fig. 79.—Embroidery from the garment of Assurnazirpal. See text. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 670.)

Fig. 80.—Assyrian seal. Two bull-men beside the sacred tree; on the right a sun wheel, the spokes of which are formed by four figures with plants of life. Thus the sacred tree is indicated as the world tree of the year. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 706.)

Figs. 81–82.—Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud. Asherahs in a kind of network, a bower flanked by genii with eagle heads. (J. Karabacek, *Die Persische Nadelmalerei Susanschild*, Leipzig, 1881, p. 152.)

Figs. 83–84.—Assyrian reliefs. Asherahs more treelike, but trunks similar to columns. (*Ibid.*, p. 153.)

Fig. 85.—From a Kurdistan rug. The form of the tree of life shows clearly that it is a deviation from Figures 83–84. (*Ibid.*, p. 154.)

Fig. 86.—Silver bowl of Amanthus, Cyprus. Egyptian-Cyprian style. In the middle, the birth of Horus from a lotus flower; on the right, a winged goddess with lotus flowers in her hand; on the left, the tree of the world as a pillar with palmettos, flanked by priests with crosses in their hands. (Forrer, *op. cit.*, Fig. 322.)

Fig. 87.—Assyrian seal. The tree of life stylized by degenerated lotus-palmettos (see Figs. 86 and 89) flanked by two griffins, two crosses, and two sun ideograms, *ilu* ("god"). (Ward, *op. cit.*, Fig. 700.)

Fig. 88.—Greek vase, 1300 B.C., British Museum, London. Two sphinxes beside the tree of life.

Fig. 89.—Silver bowl of Courion, Cyprus. Two gods flanking the world tree formed by lotus palmettos. (Montelius, *op. cit.*, Fig. 382.)

Fig. 90.—Seal, hoard of Courion, Cyprus. The sacred tree adored by a man. (Wilke, *op. cit.*, Fig. 160e.)

Fig. 91.—Minoan gem. Woman before an altar bearing a three-branched tree. The moon is under the altar. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 160b.)

Fig. 92.—Mycenaean gem of Vaphio. Two horsemen (priests in horse disguise?) libating over a tree which stands on a pillar-like altar. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 160c.)

Fig. 93.—World pillar with altar flanked by two griffins. Crete, fifteenth century B.C. (Montelius, *op. cit.*, Fig. 1214.)

Fig. 94.—Plate of the gold ring from Mycenae, sixteenth century B.C. Woman and man praying; in the middle is a dancing woman; on the right, on an altar or in an enclosure, the tree of life. (Wilke, *op. cit.*, Fig. 160d.)

Fig. 95.—Minoan ring of Mochlos. Ship with a sacred tree and the mother goddess. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 160e.)

Fig. 96.—Seal of the third millennium B.C., Susa. Lions flanking the trifurcated tree of life. (Montelius, *op. cit.*, Fig. 1211.)

Fig. 97.—Rock carving, Bronze Age, 1200 B.C., Kalleby, Sweden. Cultic rite: four lure players beside a ship with a sacred tree, disk, and post with one hook. (G. Lechler, *5000 Jahre Deutschland*, Leipzig, 1936, Fig. 264.)

Fig. 98.—Germanic rock carving of Solberg, Norway, fifteenth century B.C. A tree with ships, sun disk, and wheel (on the right) of Mercurago type. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 286.)

Fig. 99.—Germanic rock carving of Lockeberg, Sweden, before 1000 B.C. A ship carrying a pine tree, another smaller tree, and two sun disks. A smaller ship at the bottom carries a cross. (Wirth, *op. cit.*, Pl. 160B, 4.)

Fig. 100.—Germanic rock carving of Kalleby, Sweden, second millennium B.C. Cultic rite of a marriage in a ship under the sacred tree. The couple are accompanied by a band of trumpet players (cf. Fig. 97). (Lechler, *op. cit.*, Fig. 333.)

Fig. 101.—Armenian-Persian seal with carnival picture, 700 B.C. A ship chariot with a tree as a mast. Behind the ship is a worshiper, and before it an eight-pointed sun, *ilu*. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 315.)

Fig. 102.—Carving of Maglemose culture, Hørring, Denmark, sixth millennium B.C. A ship, sacred tree, snake, and "anchor." (Wirth, *op. cit.*, Pl. 160B, 2.)

Fig. 103.—Vessel of neolithic Danubian culture, South of Russia, 3000 B.C. A sacred tree with concentric circles on the left and sun star with six spokes on the right; on both sides are three points. (*Ibid.*, Pl. 140, 2.)

Fig. 104.—Danubian pottery, third millennium B.C., Spessart, Germany. A tree in an arch. (Wilke, *op. cit.*, Fig. 162a.)

Fig. 105.—A tree with three branches and a sun symbol, Troy, about 2000 B.C. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 29c.)

Fig. 106.—A tree from a clay drum, Quenstedt, Thuringia, Germany, third millennium B.C. (P. Grimm, "Eine Miniaturtrommel aus einem Hügelgrabe bei Quenstedt," *Jahresschr. f. d. Vorgesch. der sächsisch thüringischen Länder*, XXIV, 1936, p. 102, Fig. 3.)

Fig. 107.—A potsherd, trifurcated tree, Danubian culture, third millennium B.C., Grossgartach, Germany. (Wilke, *op. cit.*, Fig. 162b.)

Fig. 108.—A potsherd, tree with sun symbol, Anau, third stratum. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 162f.)

Fig. 109.—Assyrian seal. A sacred tree with three branches (cf. Figs. 107, 91), flanked by two birds and bulls, over the tree an eagle biting the horn of the right bull. On the left a tree trunk (asherah) with fruits directed to the four points of the compass. (Ward, *op. cit.*, Fig. 676.)

Fig. 110.—Celtic altar of Roman time found at Comminges, Museum, Toulouse. The sacred tree accompanied by three sun circles representing the course of the year. (Wirth, *op. cit.*, Fig. 146, 5.)

Fig. 111.—Celtic altar, Museum, Toulouse. The sacred tree is obviously a cypress with the swastika representing the course of the sun. (Lechler, *Vom Hakenkreuz die Geschichte eines Symbols*, Fig. 52, 10.)

Figs. 112–114.—Early Christian, symbolic grave lamps, found in Gezer, Palestine. Fig. 112. The tree of life with six points. Fig. 113. The tree of life in the form of a cross. Fig. 114. The tree of life on a hill. The lamplight forms the top of the tree of life. (R. A. R. Macalister, *Excavation of Gezer*, London, 1912, I–III.)

Fig. 115.—A Christian door stone, Tell el Akkāsseh, Transjordan. The sun wheel with four spokes is identified with the world tree. On the left and right a sun wheel cross. (Wirth, *op. cit.*, Fig. 141, 9.)


Figs. 116–118.—Seals. The cuneiform ideogram , *ilu*, identical with the sun wheel, as determinative of the sacred tree, indicating it as the world tree or the tree of the year (cf. *Figs. 67–80*). Fig. 116. Palestine, Tell es Safi, pre-Israelite. Fig. 117. Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian. Fig. 118. Pre-Elamitic, Susa. (Wirth, *op. cit.*, Fig. 145, 4.)

Fig. 119.—Early Christian gem, British Museum, London. The cross with a pigeon over a fish. The cross is identified with the tree of life, thus connected with the fish as on Assyrian seals (*Figs. 67–71*). Early Christian, carnelian, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 360, 9.)

Fig. 120.—The fish in the sun wheel. The old Indo-European fish symbol is given a new interpretation by Christian symbolism. The sun wheel is the year, the fish is Christ, the ruler of the year, of the world. The Greek word for fish is *ichthys*, interpreted as: *Iēsous CHristos THEou HYios Sōtēr* ("Jesus Christ, son of God, Saviour"). (*Ibid.*, p. 400.)

Fig. 121.—Old Germanic Irminsul post, 50 B.C. The top is carved like a face (for arm position compare *Figs. 8, 20, 43, 90*). (Lechler, *5000 Jahre Deutschland*, Fig. 520.)

Fig. 122.—Votive gift at the foundation of Šušinak temple, Susa, after 2450 B.C. On one side, the world pillar adored by two worshipers; on the other side, a sun wheel with a star of eight spokes. (Montelius, *Die alteren Kulturperioden*, Fig. 841.)

Fig. 123.—Votive gift, Šušinak temple, Susa, after 2450 B.C. Goldlike bronze leaf. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 852.)

Fig. 124.—Seal of Gudea, Sumerian king, about 2340 B.C. Ea on his throne gives Gudea the water of life together with the plant of life. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 623.)

Fig. 125.—A Sumerian seal. Gilgamesh protecting the tree of life from a lion, which has the same form as on Figure 122; the tree is topped by three branches, proving that the tree of life legend was already highly developed (cf. *Fig. 124*). Ward said (p. 219) that he misses old Sumerian representations of the tree of life. He gave only one example (*Fig. 126*), but our illustration corroborates its existence; moreover, I have additional similar seals (cf. *Fig. 78*). (Ward, *op. cit.*, Fig. 162.)

Fig. 126.—Sumerian seal of Dungi, 2451 B.C. The tree of life, stylized as in Figures 125 and 122, between both eastern mountains from which Shamash, the sun god, rises each day,

here pictured as an upward flying eagle. The mountains are designed like the network around the Assyrian asherahs (cf. *Figs. 68, 69*). (*Ibid.*, Fig. 663.)

Fig. 127.—Sumerian seal of Gudean period about 2340 B.C. The mother goddess with crown and two long tresses sitting before the tree of life. Before her a woman who is spinning. The top of the distaff shows the same three-pointed form as the tree behind the goddess. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 217.)

Fig. 128.—Old Germanic urn from Bardenfleth, 50 B.C., Museum, Hannover. Tree of life, Irminsul, accompanied by a double swastika and a square with hooks. (Lechler, "Kreuz Hakenkreuz Irminsul," Fig. 24.)

Figs. 129-131.—Old Germanic urn from Nitzahn, Brandenburg, about 100 A.D. The tree of life accompanied by two swastikas and a cross. (*Ibid.*, Figs. 21-23.)

Fig. 132.—Peasant symbolism from a farm near Lübeck, Germany. The brickwork shows the same form of the tree of life as the world tree on the old Germanic ash urn of Figure 129. The peasants of today call these symbols "witch brooms." Three "witch brooms" and two windmills.

Figs. 133-134.—Viking decorations from Ostra Paboda, Smaland, Sweden, ninth century. The tree of life has very close relationship in its form to Assyrian asherahs (*Figs. 69, 81, 87*). Vikings were in contact on the Black Sea with Islam; thus the Old Nordic Irminsul is influenced in its form by the Near East. In Figure 134 there are three palmettos, trees of life, around a six-pointed rosette (sun wheel).

Fig. 135.—From a bucket found at Björkö, Uppland, Sweden, 900 A.D. Irish ornaments. The other influence upon Viking style. The tree of life with griffins in branches transformed into spiral-like forms. The tree on a hill arch enclosing a lily.

Fig. 136.—Relief from the "Externsteine," Germany, 1115. The Descent from the Cross. The Cross of Christ with four equally long spokes. Over the Cross, God the father. On the left, a weeping sun; on the right, a weeping moon. Under the Cross the bended Irminsul (tree of life). The tree is bent either to express mourning (like sun and moon) or to demonstrate that the old tree of life is relieved by the new tree of life, the Christ, corresponding to the legends of the wood of the Cross (see text).

Fig. 137.—Antependium, Cathedral of Halberstadt, thirteenth century. Saints, with cross and swastika decorations, under the tree of life, obviously an oak tree. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 35.)

Fig. 138.—The Irminsul of the Externsteine relief, from Figure 136. The bent tree design, showing that it has the same form as in Figures 122, 125, 135, 137, and 140. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 33.)

Fig. 139.—Antependium, Cathedral of Halberstadt, Germany. Stylized tree of life (cf. Fig. 129). (*Ibid.*, Fig. 36.)

Fig. 140.—The catacomb of Domitilla, Rome, fourth century. Christ as a fish (cf. *Figs. 119, 120*), a dolphin, in the water of life from which grows up the tree of life with the sun on its top. Very often misinterpreted as an anchor. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 34.)

Fig. 141.—A relief from Deir es Suriani, ninth century A.D. The representation of the Christian tree of life demonstrates very clearly the Islamic influence upon Christian art. Deir es Suriani was a Syrian monastery in Egypt. The tree of life is flanked by two crosses. (H. Glück, *Christliche Kunst des Ostens*, 1923, Fig. 60.)

Fig. 142.—The descent of Buddha. A relief from Amaravati stupa, India, second century B.C. The sun disk rising from the water with dragons. The outer circle of the disk shows squares and circles filled with sun wheels and swastikas. The middle part has the footprints of Buddha before the pillar-like tree, decorated with sun wheels and covered with blankets because he had gone to the upper world. In the upper part worshippers encircle the world tree before which is an altar with the footprints of the resurrected Buddha.

Fig. 143.—Stravana Belgola, Mysore, India. Tirthakara, one of "the perfected Saints," growing up from a tree between two tree-covered mountains. (B. Keith, *Mythology of All Races, Indian*, Boston, 1927, VI, Pl. XXVIII.)

Fig. 144.—Orpheus in the lower world. Christian relief, fourth century. The soul of Eurydice on a tree (cf. *Figs. 33, 34b, 34c*). (Glück, *op. cit.*, Fig. 51.)

Fig. 145.—Peasant rug from Pennsylvania, 1826 A.D., Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia. Made by German immigrants coming from the Rhinepfalz. Trees of life flanking a mountain on which grows a tree: sun rosettes, swastikas, crosses, and a fruit basket.

Fig. 146.—A door from Provinz Hassia, Germany. Sun wheel in whirling representation with Irminsul. In the lower field a tree of life in a vessel. (K. T. Weigel, *Lebendige Vorzeit*, Berlin, 1934, Fig. 29.)

Fig. 147.—Fourlands near Hamburg. Peasant embroidery representing the world ash Yggdrasil of the *Edda*. It stands in a water vessel, the well of Urd; four stags are eating its foliage, as reported in the *Edda*. (*Ibid.*, Fig. 37.)

Fig. 148.—A door from Reichenan (District Hoexter), Germany. A snake coiled in a stylized spiral under the tree of life on top of a post. The inscription reads: "Our Lord may bless all who come and go." (*Ibid.*, Fig. 29.)

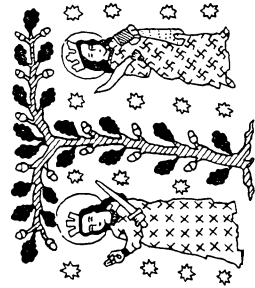


FIG. 137

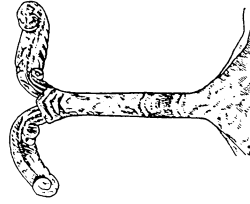


FIG. 138

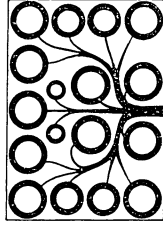


FIG. 139

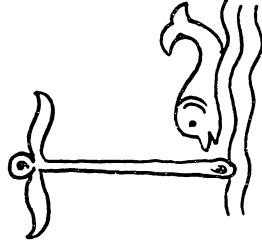


FIG. 140



FIG. 136

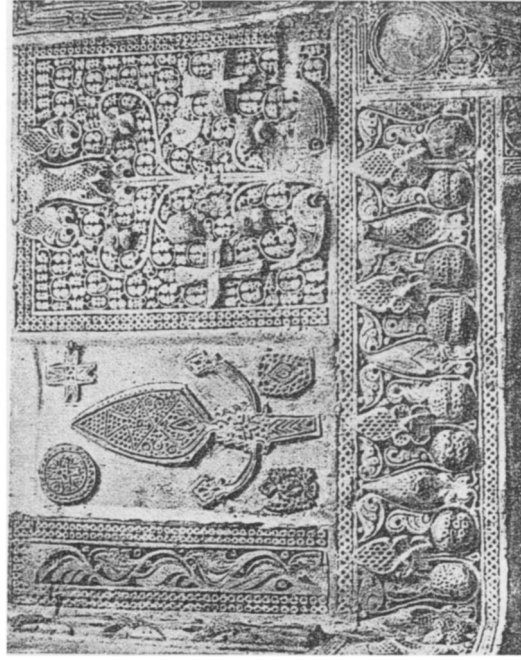


FIG. 141

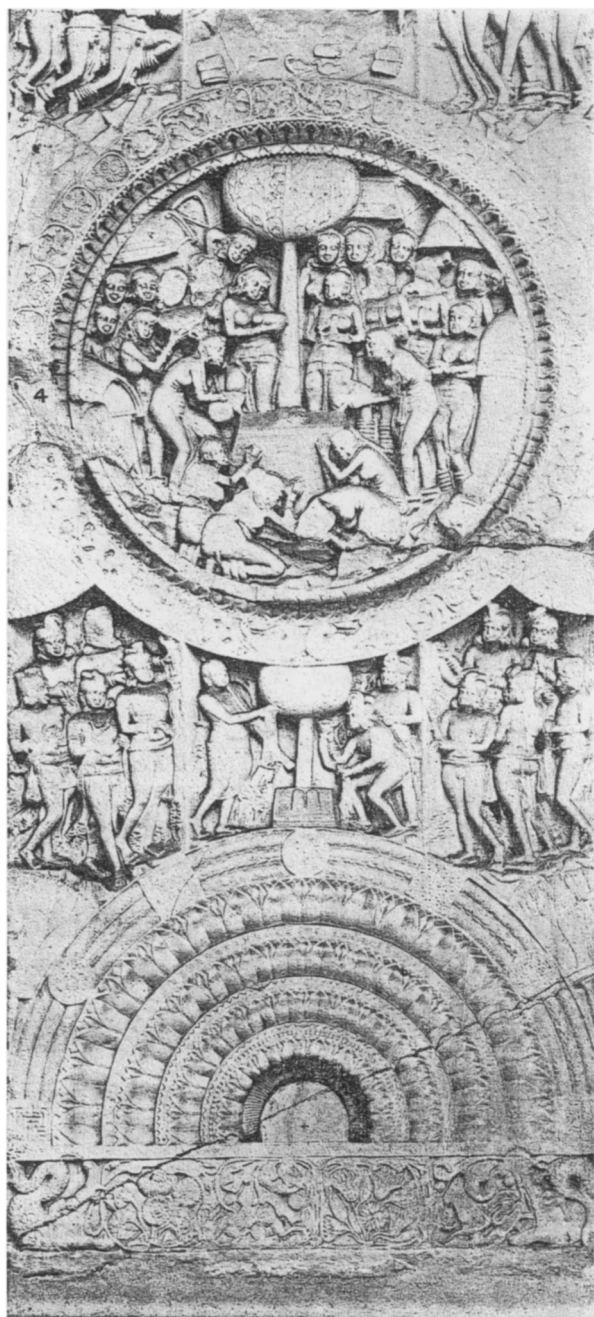


FIG. 142



FIG. 143



FIG. 144



FIG. 145

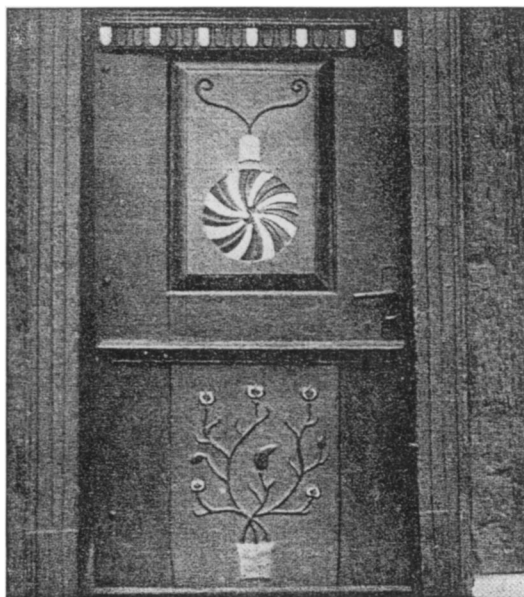


FIG. 146

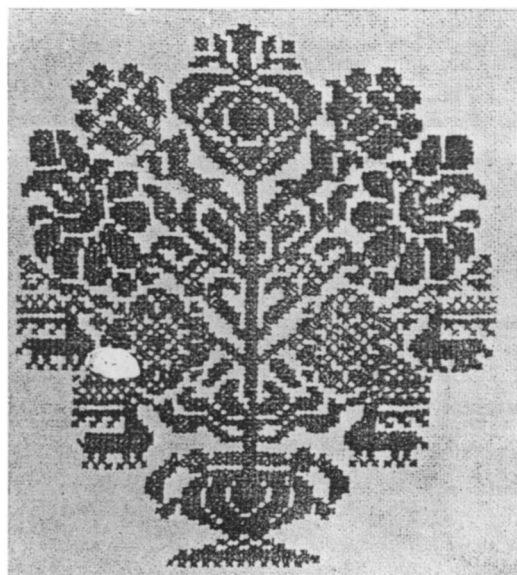


FIG. 147

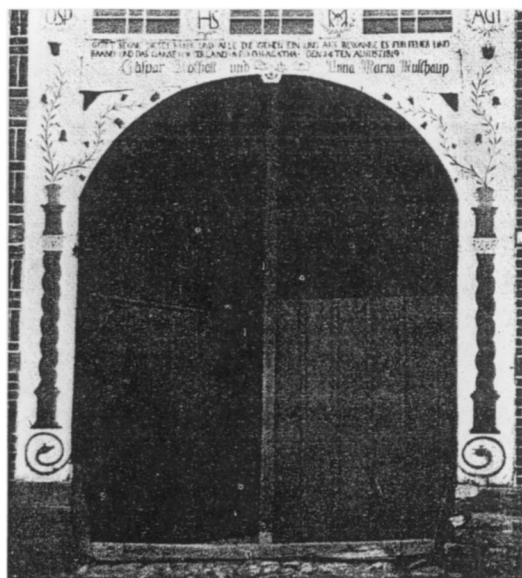


FIG. 148